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The Lutheran Hymnal after Seventy-Five Years: Its Role in the Shaping of *Lutheran Service Book*

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The year 2016 will mark not only the tenth anniversary of the publication of *Lutheran Service Book* (*LSB*) but also the seventy-fifth anniversary of *The Lutheran Hymnal* (*TLH*). As one who was intimately involved in the development of *LSB*,[1] I find it hard to believe that we have now lived with the "new" hymnal longer than the number of years it actually took to develop it. More breathtaking still is the realization that *TLH* was published a full three-quarters of a century ago. While there are no firm statistics providing the percentage of congregations that still use *TLH* exclusively, the fact that there are *any* still using a seventy-five-year-old hymnal is unprecedented in modern times.

Why is this so? When the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod published its new hymnal, *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*, in 1993, virtually every congregation in that church body transitioned to the new book.[2] Yet in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), a 1999 survey taken just as development of the Synod's new hymnal commenced revealed that 53% of congregations had *TLH* available and that 36% still made regular use of it—a full eighteen years after the Synod's previous "new" hymnal, *Lutheran Worship*, had been published.[3]

During the development of *LSB*, the question of how best to unite two hymnal traditions—namely, *TLH* and *Lutheran Worship* (*LW*)—continually

[1] From 1996 to 2007 the author served as Executive Director for the LCMS Commission on Worship and in that capacity served as project director for *Lutheran Service Book*. This article was originally presented as a public lecture on October 21, 2015, in recognition of his advancement in rank to Professor.

[2] Within three years of publication, congregations were informed that nearly ninety-five percent of congregations had purchased *Christian Worship*. See Victor H. Prange, "The Shaping of *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*," in *Not unto Us: A Celebration of the Ministry of Kurt J. Eggert* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2001), 252.

[3] "Concordia Publishing House/Commission on Worship: 1999 Worship Survey," in *Lutheran Service Book Historical Records*, vol. 4, *Other Documents*, compiled by Paul J. Grime and Jon D. Vieker (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2007), 29.

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occupied the LCMS Commission on Worship and its hymnal committees. The concern that we not tip our hand toward one hymnal or the other even surfaced when it came time to choose a title for the new book. Naming it *The Lutheran Hymnal II*, for example, was clearly out of the question! Nevertheless, *TLH* did figure prominently in the development of *LSB*. This article will explore one particular area of influence, namely, the extent to which the *LSB* Liturgy Committee wrestled with how to include the beloved *TLH* Page 15 service in a twenty-first-century hymnal.

I. On the Road to *TLH*

In order to understand the impact that *TLH* exerted on *LSB*, it is necessary, however, to consider how *TLH* came to hold such a prominent position of influence in the Synod.[4] When work began on *TLH* in 1929, the opportunity presented itself for the church bodies that comprised the Synodical Conference to develop a common hymnal.[5] Not to be lost in this laudable ecumenical goal, however, was the fact that the LCMS itself was in need of a common direction in its worship practices. This was the era, after all, when the Synod was on its long journey from German to English as the language of worship. Those still using German had little trouble; Walther's hymnal, published eighty years earlier, was the exclusive resource. Anyone using this German hymnal could expect reasonable consistency from one congregation to another, with its exclusive reliance on hymnody of German origin.

For congregations that were making the transition to English, however, it was apparently a different story. In the early 1930s, editorials and occasional letters to the editor appeared in the *Lutheran Witness* in which concern was expressed about the deterioration of a common service from one congregation to another. A rather informed, though unnamed, layman, for example, wrote a letter in which he decried the apparent lack of appreciation for liturgical order within Missouri Synod congregations at the very time when other, non-ritualistic church bodies were beginning to appreciate the church's liturgical treasures. His conclusion: "Waiving the differences in taste and temperament, it is safe to say that Lutherans who

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[4] Two helpful resources by Carl F. Schalk that chronicle the development of hymnals in North American Lutheranism are *God's Song in a New Land: Lutheran Hymnals in America* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), and *Source Documents in American Lutheran Hymnody* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1996).

[5] In addition to the LCMS, those members were the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

do not value the liturgical services of their Church have never bestowed much thought on them."[6] Nine months later, another unnamed layman expressed similar concerns, though much more directly. He writes,

> The form used in H. Church was entirely different from that of two other churches which I frequently attend, and these two also differ very much from each other. The result was that the whole service was spoiled for me because I could not take part in anything but the hymns on the board and listen to the sermon. One stands there like a dummy, and if one tries to find the responses to the altar readings or chants, one usually does not succeed until it is all finished.[7]

Several editorials appeared in the following years, expressing similar concerns and raising the call for congregations to follow a uniform order. In an apparent response, another layman expressed his delight that the Synod's official news magazine was taking up the cause. Writing under the title, "Our Liturgical Chaos," he described his own experience: "In my home town there are about 25 churches of the Missouri Synod, and I do not know of two that use the same liturgy. Some pastors and organists have reduced the liturgy to the merest skeleton, while others have made a very elaborate affair out of it."[8]

Shortly thereafter, in 1935, Theodore Graebner, professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and editor of the *Lutheran Witness*, borrowed that title, "Our Liturgical Chaos," and published an essay in which he reiterated the call for congregations to strive for uniformity in their services, especially those that were continuing their transition from German to English.[9] While Graebner did not provide any specific examples of what this chaos looked like, he did provide a marvelous summary a few years later in an editorial in the *Lutheran Witness* on the occasion of the publication of *TLH* in 1941. In that editorial, titled "Follow the Entire Service," Graebner alludes to his previous essay when he writes: "Some five or six years ago we made a similar appeal [for a uniform service] in an essay entitled 'Our Liturgical Chaos.' In that essay we pointed out the difficulties which challenge the wit of the hapless guest preacher who finds himself with an utterly strange ritual as he stands at the altar."[10]

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[6] "The Value of Liturgical Services Recognized," *Lutheran Witness* 49, no 19 (1930): 308.

[7] "Our Liturgical Confusion," *Lutheran Witness* 50, no. 12 (1931): 206.

[8] "Our Liturgical Chaos," *Lutheran Witness* 52, no. 4 (1933): 57.

[9] Theodore Graebner, "Our Liturgical Chaos," in *The Problem of Lutheran Union and other Essays*, 135–166 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1935), 135–166.

[10] Theodore Graebner, "Follow the Entire Service," *Lutheran Witness* 21, no. 21 (1941): 347.

While congregations did have resources available to them such as the 1912 *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (*ELHB*) and the 1917 *Liturgy and Agenda*, it is not clear whether they used them all that effectively or faithfully. One problem with *ELHB*, the Synod's first official English-language hymnal, was that it was available in several editions, including both music and text-only versions. Just the fact that these editions contained differing sets of page numbers presented practical challenges that likely discouraged their use.[11] Another was the fact that the 1917 agenda had provided a second order of the morning service that simplified some aspects of the historic rite.[12] Even in cases where congregations were using one of the official services of the Synod, it appears that attention to the details of the service was so haphazard that the service shared little resemblance from one congregation to another.

Specific evidence of the rapidly changing nature of worship in the LCMS was apparent, however, more than a decade before Graebner raised his alarms. While this evidence takes us slightly off our topic in that it focuses on hymnody rather than the order of service, it is worth the digression. In this case, the catalyst was clearly the transition from German to English, which each congregation of Synod was allowed to make at its own pace. That transition, which the Synod had in varying degrees resisted for so long, was bound to have some unintended consequences, not least of which was that a body of hymnody in the English language entered into use in our congregations that relied less on the traditional Lutheran chorales and more on hymns from non-Lutheran sources.[13]

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[11] Compounding the problem was that not all congregations were using the 1912 *ELHB* but also previous versions from the late nineteenth century. See Dan Paul Gilbert, "How the Missouri Synod Accepted The Lutheran Hymnal of 1941," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1978): 24; and William G. Polack, *The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal*, 2nd and rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1942), v.

[12] Graebner admits in his editorial of 1941 that his 1935 essay "Our Liturgical Chaos" was an apology of sorts for the decision to include a simplified order of service in the 1917 agenda "since the time was not ripe for a return to the old Lutheran type of liturgical service." Graebner, "Follow the Entire Service," 347.

[13] Jon D. Vieker ably traces this transition in his recent dissertation, "The Fathers' Faith, the Children's Song: Missouri Lutheranism Encounters American Evangelicalism in Its Hymnals, Hymn Writers, and Hymns, 1889–1912" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2014).

Evidence of a significant change comes from a report printed in the *Lutheran Witness* in 1922.[14] Theodore Buenger, a teacher at Concordia College in St. Paul, Minnesota, reported that the president of the institution had recently sought the counsel of pastors regarding hymns that all young men should know before heading off to the seminary. The college polled the pastors of the English District, which had at the time been a part of the Synod for only a decade, as well as two (unnamed) professors at the seminary in St. Louis. Twenty-four pastors sent in replies, as did the Cleveland English Conference, which sent in a joint response, and the two (still unnamed) seminary professors. Two lists of ten hymns were prepared. The first consisted of those hymns deemed important enough to be committed to memory.

Rock of Ages*	24
Just as I Am*	23
Abide with Me	21
What a Friend We Have in Jesus*	21
Jesus, Lover of My Soul*	18
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*	17
My Faith Looks Up to Thee*	16
Come, Thou Almighty King	15
There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood	14
From Greenland's Icy Mountains	13

The second list provided additional hymns that the respondents believed should be sung more frequently in school chapel services in order for future seminarians to become better acquainted with them.

My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*	13
All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name	12
In the Hour of Trial*	11
Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed	9
Holy, Holy, Holy*	9
Holy Ghost, with Light Divine*	8
Thy Life Was Giv'n for Me*	7
I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*	7
In the Cross of Christ I Glory*	7
Let Me Be Thine Forever	7

The contents of the lists are most revealing. Only one hymn among the twenty originates from sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Germany, and that one, "A Mighty Fortress," probably earned a spot only because of its

[14] Theodore Buenger, "Hymns in the Curriculum of Our Colleges," *Lutheran Witness* 41, no. 5 (1922): 75. The asterisks behind the hymns in the list below indicate the recommendations of the Cleveland English Conference's joint response.

iconic value as the so-called "Battle Hymn of the Reformation." To think that in just a single generation, and with the transition from German to English far from complete,[15] the Missouri Synod was rapidly losing its hymnic heritage. Though the Synod was undoubtedly still wearing proudly its moniker as the singing church, it was, in reality, sounding a lot more like the general Protestants than like Lutherans.

Two interesting comments accompany Buenger's report. First, he writes that "the request has been made that we publish the results of the questionnaire."[16] The passive voice is telling in that someone, again unnamed, wanted the results of this survey to be made known to the Synod but apparently did not want anyone to know who had made the request.[17] The second comment comes at the end of his brief report, where he writes that "this list will be taken as a canon in St. Paul at the present."[18] In other words, it is not necessary to guess what future pastors and teachers were singing in daily chapel at at least one of the Synod's prep schools.

Three years later, another report on hymn preferences appeared in the *Lutheran Witness*. Walter Wismar, a church musician in St. Louis, reported that when he spoke to young people's groups on the topic of hymnody, he would always conclude by polling the students, asking them to write down their three favorite hymns, indicating that they could provide either English or German titles.[19] The top twenty hymns identified by these young people are equally telling:

1. What a Friend We Have in Jesus 284
2. Rock of Ages 158
3. Abide with Me 140
4. A Mighty Fortress (G) 138
5. Just as I Am 119
6. Jesus, Lover of My Soul 109

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[15] In 1922, 12% of congregations in the LCMS were still worshiping only in German and another 32% were worshiping more in German than English. Compare that with only 23% that were worshiping only in English or more English than German. By 1935, the time when Graebner published his essay, only 2% of congregations still worshiped solely in German and 10% more German than English. *Statistical Yearbook, 1935* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1936), 149–150.

[16] Buenger, "Hymns in the Curriculum of Our Colleges," 75.

[17] Admittedly, this use of the passive voice with an unnamed agent may simply have been common parlance at that time. The result, however, is still the same: we do not know who requested its dissemination.

[18] Buenger, "Hymns in the Curriculum of Our Colleges," 75.

[19] Walter Wismar, "Popular Hymns," *Lutheran Witness* 44, no. 17 (1925): 280.

7. Savior, I Follow On 106
8. Nearer, My God, to Thee 98
9. In the Hour of Trial 82
10. I'm But a Stranger Here 68
11. From Greenland's Icy Mountains 54
12. My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less 53
13. Abide, O Dearest Jesus (G) 31
14. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty 24
15. O Friend of Souls, How Blest Am I (G) 22
16. Lamb of God, Most Holy (G) 20
17. My Faith Looks Up to Thee 18
18. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (G) 14
19. Lead, Kindly Light 12
20. Beautiful Savior 11

The results are quite similar to the "canon" at Concordia, St. Paul, reported three years earlier. One can, perhaps, take solace in the fact that in this case five of the hymns are identified as being of German origin (marked by Wismar with a "G"). Of course, the number of votes for those five German hymns tallied together still falls short of the number one choice on the list. One wonders whether Wismar submitted his report as a retort, to some degree, to the earlier survey from Concordia, St. Paul. While the results were only marginally better, it provided Wismar the opportunity to make the point that the Synod was heading in a new direction: "Contemplating further the above list and figures, we realize that the German choral is losing favor and prestige." Later, he adds, "While a number of Standard English hymns appear on the list, the best of them are not equal to the German choral."[20]

What these two reports from the 1920s reveal is that the transition from German to English was not proceeding as smoothly as Missouri's fathers had hoped. While the editors of *ELHB* were careful to maintain a balance between hymnody of German and English origin, it did not take long for the non-Lutheran, English-original hymnody to predominate in the hearts and minds of the people. In his dissertation on the development of the Synod's first English-language hymnal, Jon Vieker summarizes this unintended consequence:

> Although the editors of ELHB had made a sizeable commitment to retaining the German hymnody of Missouri's fathers in English trans-

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[20] Wismar, "Popular Hymns," 280. While the limited scope of this survey is evident, with a "margin of error" that would likely be quite high, the similarities between the results of Wismar's surveys and the Concordia, St. Paul, list suggest that both were fairly indicative of hymn preferences at that time.

> lation, the hymns of American Evangelicalism that they introduced in even greater number quickly began to dominate Sunday-morning services. The transition from German to English in the Missouri Synod and its ecclesial Americanization were thus greatly enhanced by the great number of Evangelical hymns its congregations quickly embraced in ELHB 1912.[21]

Thus, the LCMS had two increasingly opposed worship traditions. Given, however, the steady progression toward English, this opposition would eventually subside as familiarity with the German chorales continued to wane.

By the time the Synod resolved in 1929 to proceed with the development of a new hymnal and to invite the other members of the Synodical Conference to participate in the process, there was a growing realization in the Synod that a new resource was sorely needed. Work proceeded over the course of a decade, with periodic reports published in the *Lutheran Witness*. By the time *TLH* was published in 1941—on the eve, no less, of the United States' entrance into World War II—an up-to-date hymnal in English was bound to be a welcome resource.

II. *TLH* Comes into Its Own

It is here that I must shift to the liturgical portion of the hymnal, since the crux of my thesis concerning the impact that *TLH* had on the development of *LSB* will rely on that section of the hymnal. Liturgically speaking, the changes from *ELHB* to *TLH* were minimal. The *ELHB* morning service that included Holy Communion and was based on the Common Service of 1888, was divided into two services in *TLH*, the "Page 5" service without communion, and the familiar "Page 15" service with communion. Textually, the services in *TLH* were identical to those in *ELHB*, and musically, they were virtually the same, though some slight rhythmic changes were made here and there that likely caused some initial consternation for those who were familiar with the earlier forms.[22] One significant textual change concerned Confession and Absolution. Whereas the service in *ELHB* provided only a Declaration of Grace, the Absolution was introduced into the Page 15 service and the Declaration of Grace, which had been a part of

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[21] Vieker, "The Fathers' Faith, the Children's Song," 325.

[22] James Brauer provides a helpful service in tracing the origins of the musical setting for the Common Service at it has appeared in these hymnals. See James L. Brauer, "Trusty Steed or Trojan Horse? The Common Service in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*," *Logia* 14, no. 3 (2005): 21–30.

the original Common Service, was reserved for the non-communion, Page 5 service.[23]

Clearly, it was not in the liturgical section of *TLH* that the editors intended to make great strides, as William Polack explained in the *Handbook to The Lutheran Hymnal* when he wrote: "As to the liturgical section of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, the committee held it to be within the scope of its work to make no changes in the liturgies as such, but to simplify the rubrics as much as possible, to correct any discrepancies, to supply the most necessary general rubrics," and to add the texts of the propers where they had not been provided before.[24]

One individual who was frustrated by this limited mandate regarding the development of the services was Walter Buszin. A member of one of the subcommittees that worked on *TLH*, he shared his evaluation of the hymnal in a letter to an unknown recipient a few years after *TLH* was published.[25] In his critique, he revealed the frustration that he and others on the subcommittee had with the main hymnal committee, noting that only one individual serving on the latter had any serious training in liturgical theology. Far from advocating a departure from the historic liturgy, Buszin likely considered it a missed opportunity that the committee did not insist that the "scope of the book" with regard to the services be broader, especially by recovering some of the more venerable practices of the Lutheran tradition.

Nevertheless, despite minor misgivings and regrets, *TLH* was very well received. While there were the usual complaints about the size of the book and other minor matters, sales were unquestionably brisk.[26] References to the new hymnal in the *Lutheran Witness* in 1941 were relatively few, all of them focusing on the encouragement to use the "entire ser-

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[23] It is likely that the introduction of the Absolution was influenced by its use in a separate service of confession in Walther's agenda. *Kirchen-Agende für Evang.-Luth. Gemeinden ungeänderter Augsburgischer Confession* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1902), 91–93. This service also appeared in English in essentially the same form in the 1917 agenda, 25–27.

[24] Polack, *The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal*, vii.

[25] D. Richard Stuckwisch, "The Tale of Frustrated Lutheran Hymnal Revision," *Logia* 14, no. 3 (2005): 41.

[26] So brisk, in fact, that over 850,000 copies were sold in the first three years. John Fuchs, "From *The Lutheran Hymnal* to *Lutheran Worship*. A Paradigm of Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod History," *Concordia Journal* 20, no 2 (1994): 131. Fuchs notes that an additional reason for the initial success of *TLH* was likely the decision by Concordia Publishing House to discontinue publication of any of its previous English-language hymnals.

vice."[27] In other words, the general hope that existed within the Synod was that the appearance of *TLH* would facilitate a more common service among the congregations of the Synod. Given that these calls ceased the following year, one can assume that for the most part congregations settled into a use of *TLH* that was fairly consistent from place to place.

By the 1950s, however, new winds were blowing over the liturgical landscape, fueled in part by the Liturgical Movement that was sweeping across much of Christendom. With the publication of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible (RSV) in 1952, the use of language in worship also came into sharper focus. In fact, within months of the release of the RSV, a study group of students at the seminary in St. Louis (with Arthur Carl Piepkorn serving as an advisor) wrestled with the question of how the RSV might be integrated into the service used in *TLH*. They asked such questions as whether it would suffice simply to substitute the RSV text for the pericopes or whether it would be necessary to revise other occurrences of biblical texts in the service, such as in the Introits and Graduals. Acknowledging that "the Lutheran rite is thoroughly Biblical," they proposed that "a modification of the vernacular Biblical basis requires a thoroughgoing revision of the *whole* service, ordinary and propers, collects and creed as well as lessons and psalmody."[28]

Their revision, which was used in a service at the seminary in the spring of 1953, shows a fair amount of restraint in that the "Thees" and "Thous" are retained. There are seeming inconsistencies at times, such as retaining words like "didst," "lettest," and "sittest" while at the same time updating words like "hath" to "has." There were, however, a number of minor changes that occur not infrequently, including the following:

unto	→	to
meet	→	fitting
remission	→	forgiveness
infinite	→	endless
Holy Ghost	→	Holy Spirit

Probably the boldest moves appear in the Gloria in Excelsis and the Creed. In the former, the song of the angels is altered from "and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" to "and on earth peace among men with whom He

[27] See, for example, *Lutheran Witness* 60, no. 20 (1941): 341; 60, no. 21 (1941): 347; 60, no. 25 (1941): 423–424.

[28] "The Common Service Adapted according to RSV Principles," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 24, no. 5 (1953): 357.

is pleased," which matches the RSV translation. Likewise, the study group made a number of minor changes to the Apostles' Creed.[29]

In retrospect, what is most striking about this proposed service is the cumulative effect that all of the minor changes would likely have had on anyone attempting this service after decades of using the service in *TLH* and *ELHB*. While there is no record that anything ever came of this revision, it does provide evidence that some in the Synod were beginning to raise questions about the need for an update of *TLH*. In 1956, the LCMS Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics reported to the Synod convention that while the general sentiment in the Synod at the time did not favor development of a new hymnal, it was in the committee's estimation a task that should be completed within ten to twelve years.[30]

Just three years later, the Committee released two new musical settings of the Common Service by Healey Willan and Jan Bender. The preface to these settings, written by Walter Buszin, chairman of the Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics, is very revealing of the goals that were on the Committee's mind at that time. While acknowledging that *TLH* had helped to foster a degree of liturgical uniformity among congregations, he also noted some criticisms that had developed in the nearly two decades since its appearance. Buszin writes, for example, that "within a short time worshipers began to complain about monotony and the deadening effect produced by the use of the same setting year in and year out." He goes on to suggest that perhaps the time had come for some musical variety in the liturgy: "Why should the same musical setting be used on Advent Sunday, on Christmas Day, on Good Friday, on Easter Sunday, and on a Day of Humiliation and Prayer, when in each case the spirit and character of the day varies so greatly? Thoughtful Christians thus realize that it is not the text but rather the musical setting of the Liturgy which needs variety."[31]

For purposes of this study, two points are pertinent at this juncture. First, because the goal of these 1959 publications was to focus on new musical settings of the Divine Service, the Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics made no changes at all to the text of the Common Service. Thus, while there were discussions in the air concerning updating the Jacobean language in the service, nothing was done on that front at this time. Second, the introduction of these settings, coupled together with the Com-

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[29] "The Common Service Adapted according to RSV Principles," 365.

[30] See Stuckwisch's excellent recounting of this development in "A Tale of Frustrated Lutheran Hymnal Revision," 41–44.

[31] *The Order of Holy Communion: Musical Setting by Jan Bender* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), Introduction.

mittee's official report in advance of the 1959 Synod convention, left little doubt that the LCMS was on its way toward the revision of *TLH*.

The story of that revision and the detour that was taken as the Synod joined with other North American Lutheran church bodies to develop a common hymnal is simply beyond the scope of this presentation. The subsequent decision of the Synod not to give approval to *Lutheran Book of Worship* (*LBW*) and to develop instead a revision, *Lutheran Worship*, is well documented.[32] For purposes of this presentation, I will focus on one particular decision related to the development of *LW*—namely, the inclusion of the Common Service, or better known as the Page 15 service from *TLH*.

Had the LCMS adopted *LBW*, and had *LBW* found acceptance within our congregations, the Common Service would have, by and large, ceased to exist among us. So when the newly constituted Commission on Worship began its work on revising *LBW*, the decision to include the Page 15 service must have seemed at first glance to be a brilliant move. While some congregations may not have been happy about the decision to nix LCMS participation in the pan-Lutheran project, perhaps the disappointment of some would be mollified by the inclusion of that familiar service that had served so well for decades.

The thing is, when *LW* finally appeared a couple of years later, Page 15 did not look, or sound, all that familiar. Besides being buried behind more than one hundred pages of introits and graduals, the service had undergone countless changes. The language had been thoroughly updated, the accompaniments changed, and even some of the melodies had been altered. What had been intended as a familiar entrée into the new hymnal ended up being worse than a totally new service in that anyone who had sung the service from *TLH* all those years found the countless little emendations irksome, if not offensive.[33] Add to that the incessant frustration

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[32] Much of that story has already been told by D. Richard Stuckwisch, "Truly Meet, Right, and Salutary—or Not?: The Revision of the Order of the Holy Communion of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* in the Preparation and Development of *Lutheran Worship*" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2002). See also, Stuckwisch, "A Tale of Frustrated Lutheran Hymnal Revision."

[33] One is hard-pressed to fault the committees that worked on *LW*. In many ways, they were given an impossible task. The Synod had just come through a bitter fight that, while climaxing with the walkout at Concordia Seminary in February 1974, continued to linger, with the removal of some district presidents, the departure of several congregations, and deep distrust among some who remained in the Synod. It was in this climate that the Commission on Worship, which had to be reconstituted after all, save one, of its members had resigned in protest following the 1977 decision not to endorse *LBW*, had to do its work. There was enormous pressure to complete the revision of *LBW*

with the hymn accompaniments, the lingering disappointment of some that the Synod had not simply signed on to the pan-Lutheran *LBW*, and new challenges on the horizon in the form of what would come to be known as contemporary worship—all of these came together in what I would describe as a perfect storm that prevented *LW* from ever gaining a firm foothold in our congregations.

III. Moving On

This brings us to the topic at hand, namely, how *TLH* influenced the development of *Lutheran Service Book,* and, more specifically, how revisions to the Page 15 service were made for that new book. As the Commission on Worship began to deliberate in 1996 the question of whether it was time to begin work on a new hymnal, Commission member Elizabeth Werner and I were instructed to develop some discussion points to guide the conversation. Among the points that received the most attention from the Commission were the following.[34] First, *LW* had moved the ball forward, so to speak, in several important ways, such as by a more conscious promotion of the Psalter, the inclusion of the Small Catechism, the availability of several musical settings of the Divine Service, and, most importantly, the seminal teaching on the theology of worship that was contained in Norman Nagel's introduction. A second point, however, noted the weaknesses that hobbled *LW*: esoteric hymn accompaniments, minor changes in melodies of both the Page 15 service and a number of familiar hymns, retranslations of hymns that were often of poorer quality than the originals, and confusing options in the services that often befuddled the person in the pew. After considerable discussion, the Commission concluded that *LW* would never become a beloved hymnal the way *TLH* had, and that it had probably reached a saturation point in that not many more congregations would ever adopt it than the 67% that had by that point.[35]

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quickly, lest more congregations, tired of waiting for a new hymnal, simply adopted *LBW*. In regard to the many changes made to the Page 15 service, the Commission understandably believed that the changes would make the service more accessible. However, the "little" changes likely added up, and the Commission members were hobbled by the lack of time both to reflect on their decisions and to seek the reaction of others out in the church.

[34] "Some Ideas regarding a New Hymnal/Supplement," *Lutheran Service Book Historical Records*, vol. 4, *Other Documents*, 1–2.

[35] While *LW* was available in 67% of congregations, the 1999 survey showed that only 58% were actually using it on a regular basis. "Concordia Publishing House/Commission on Worship: 1999 Worship Survey," *Historical Records*, vol. 4, *Other Documents*, 29.

Thus was born what would ten years later appear as *Lutheran Service Book*.[36] It would be another two years, with the intervening publication of a hymnal supplement, before work would begin in earnest on what was at that time dubbed the Lutheran Hymnal Project. Committees met for the first time in January of 1999, and already at this point the Liturgy Committee was wrestling with the place that the Common Service—the Page 15 service—would occupy in the new hymnal, a deliberation that would last for four years!

The best way to chronicle this careful, and sometimes fitful, approach of the Liturgy Committee to what had by that point in time become a much-revered service, is simply by working our way through the historical record of the committee's deliberations.[37] Already at its second meeting, the committee was prepared to report to the commission that a limited testing of a revised version of Page 15 would be ready by December of that year. A short while later, the committee was seeking the names of congregations, especially those using *TLH*, that could serve as test sites for the Page 15 revision.

By the fall of 1999, with a revised version of the Page 15 service nearly ready for testing, the Liturgy Committee was wrestling with questions of both music and language. Their sense was that, in contrast to the extensive changes to the music in the version of this service that appeared in *LW*, there was little wisdom in forcing musical changes on people who had been singing this service for nearly a century. The committee was proceeding, however, with gentle updating of the language, similar to what had been done in *LW*. Questions were raised concerning the purpose for the upcoming testing, asking, for example, whether a congregation of the twenty-first century could live with the modest revisions that were being proposed. In other words, at this point so early in the project, the committee was struggling to determine whether congregations that had been using *TLH* for so long would be willing to accept updated language so long as the musical setting remained the same. The members of the Liturgy Committee recognized that they were walking a fine line, hoping on the one hand to demonstrate that the committee had "heard the concerns

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[36] The decision to move forward on a new hymnal was made at the September 3–4, 1996, meeting of the Commission and then reaffirmed at the next meeting, November 19–20, 1996.

[37] The minutes of the Liturgy Committee are included in *Lutheran Service Book Historical Records*, vol. 2, *Committee Minutes*, 429–517.

about past revisions"—namely, what had appeared in *LW*—but on the other hand to do so in a way that did not cast a bad light on the previous work.[38]

Several days after the Liturgy Committee's October 12–13, 1999, meeting, I drafted the cover letter[39] that was sent to approximately fifty congregations, inviting them to serve as field test congregations for the revised Page 15 service. The language used in my letter reveals the tight-rope that we were attempting to walk. I made it clear, for example, that we were not changing any of the melodies or harmonies. And as to the matter of updating the language, I noted that our "gentle" update was similar to what had been done recently for the new hymnals for both the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods. Finally, since the committee had not yet taken up the issue of whether or how to revise the language of the creeds, I indicated that each participating congregation could order test copies with either the *TLH* or *LW* translation of the creeds, depending on what they were currently using. Since our goal was to ascertain the reaction to the other changes, we made certain to eliminate the creed from the discussion at that time.[40]

By the spring of 2000 we had received approximately thirty responses to the first test. The general response was good, though the consistent complaint that was raised concerned the updating of the Jacobean language. As the Liturgy Committee reviewed the comments, a larger question came into focus, namely, what the purpose was for retaining the Common Service. The committee's sense was that this venerable service, which had served in the midpoint of the twentieth century as the common liturgical text for virtually all Lutherans in North America, was worth preserving for the next generation, and that in order for that to happen, a careful updating of the language would best serve to introduce the service to a whole generation that had not used the version that appeared in *LW*.[41] It should

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[38] *Lutheran Service Book Historical Records*, vol. 2, *Committee Minutes*, 446.

[39] This letter is in my personal files. The documents mentioned here and in the notes below to my personal files are also most likely included in the *LSB* archives, which are stored at the Concordia Historical Institute. Among the eighteen boxes of archived materials, they will be found in box 8, folders 12–14.

[40] We were very diligent to make this field test as controlled as possible. Note, for example, this instruction that was provided in the same letter: "For this testing, we strongly encourage you to conduct the service as your congregation is accustomed to it. For example, if you do not chant in your congregation, then do not chant this service. If your congregation deviates from the service in other ways, those too should be continued (though we may not wish to encourage them!). Our goal is see how easy it is for congregations to use this revised service as they currently know it."

[41] *Lutheran Service Book Historical Records,* vol. 2, *Committee Minutes*, 455. Throughout the development of *LSB*, the Commission on Worship and the hymnal committees

be noted that at this April 2000 meeting, the committee made a significant number of minor modifications to the service as they continued to press forward.

The committee's intent to provide an updated version of the Page 15 service continued for almost another year. In January 2001, the committee members even developed a rationale for continuing in this direction. The first eight points were developed by Dr. Thomas Winger, a member of the committee; the last point was added by the committee.

1. A Lutheran theology of the Word suggests that the Word should be understandable—a principle that led to the adoption of vernacular services.
2. The language of the KJV and the Book of Common Prayer was already archaic in the 16th and 17th centuries, but was used because the language of the liturgy tends to be conservative.
3. Many features of this language moved from archaic to obsolete by the 18th century. Hence, when we Lutherans moved from German into English in the 19th century, we adopted a form of language that was already out of common use.
4. The retention of archaic or obsolete language can be easily justified when one is preserving original texts, but is difficult to justify in translations. There is no compelling reason to retain 500-year-old language when translating ancient liturgical or Biblical texts.
5. This does not mean that the language of the liturgy needs to be popular or informal. There is a distinction between modern language as such, and the various "registers" of style in use today. The language of the liturgy can be formal, churchly, and dignified, without being archaic or obsolete.

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continually invited input from the church. In addition to the targeted field tests that were conducted on a small scale, we also sought input from larger groups. For example, delegates to both the 2000 and 2003 district conventions were provided updates on the Commission's progress toward a new hymnal and then given the opportunity to complete a survey. The delegates to the conventions in the year 2000 were asked whether their congregations would use the Page 15 service on an occasional basis if it were included in the new hymnal. Responses from over 2,200 delegates indicated that 78% thought they would. *Lutheran Service Book Historical Records*, vol. 4, *Other Documents*, 33. Unfortunately, we did not ask about the language issue in that survey, partly out of a concern that it would be too complicated a question for delegates in such a short time. Had we asked that question, and especially had we asked the delegates to indicate which hymnal their congregation used at that time, we might have discovered considerably earlier that the Liturgy Committee was barking up the wrong tree, so to speak, as it persisted with its plans to update the Jacobean language.

6. Should liturgical language then be regularly updated? In keeping with Luther's advice in the preface to the Small Catechism, public texts should not be changed very often. But once every 500 years isn't very often.
7. If regular TLH users are happy with the texts in the old form, and understand them, why update them? Answer: the Common Service form of the liturgy is a treasure that we do not want to lose, and is valuable enough that we would hope congregations would re-adopt. Many congregations that moved from TLH to LW moved completely into DS II, as if it were a replacement for the Common Service. They may be now so accustomed to modern language that they would not consider moving back into the obsolete language forms of TLH. Such congregations are impoverished by the loss of the Common Service, which is superior theologically to DS II in many ways. Modern language will encourage them to add this service into their 'rotation'.
8. Furthermore, when the Common Service is used side by side with DS II, common language between the two services aids memory retention and forestalls stumbling.
9. No other Lutherans have retained the old language. Even the more conservative Lutherans have changed it.[42]

The committee still believed at this time that a thorough updating of the language was the correct course to take and that a concerted effort to teach the church on these matters would be required.[43]

Meanwhile, though the committee was committed to an updated language, reactions continued to suggest that this direction would meet with some opposition. A second round of testing of the revised service with even more congregations participating concluded in mid-2001. We specifically asked about the importance of retaining the "thees" and "thous" in the sung portions. The response suggested that a clear barrier existed for the 35% of congregation that still used *TLH* exclusively:

Evaluation Question	**Answers Provided**	***TLH* only**	***LW* only**
How important is the retention of the "thees" and "thous" to your congregation?	very important	11	2
	somewhat important	13	6
	not important	11	20
	no big deal	0	5

[42] This rationale is found in my personal files.

[43] See committee minutes, *Lutheran Service Book Historical Records*, vol. 2, *Committee Minutes*, 468.

This concern was reinforced by the response of one pastor, who wrote:

> It appears that in my congregation the retention of "Thees" and "Thous" is much more important than I realized. . . . If the purpose of this new hymnal is to unite us in a single hymnal, then leaving the Jacobean language as it is would remove one significant barrier to its acceptance by a significant portion of our Synod. Now, if this were 25 years ago and we were developing the revision for *LW*, then I would have a different opinion. But as it is, the dichotomy between the Jacobean-loving *TLH* users and the contemporary language *LW* users is so entrenched, [that] the updating of the language will only serve to alienate those who use *TLH.*[44]

Thoughtful comments such as this increasingly led the committee to the realization that all the teaching in the world would perhaps be of little help if congregations still using *TLH* would not give the new hymnal a second look, so long as *their* service was significantly altered.

The Liturgy Committee's position on how best to present the Page 15 service evolved throughout 2001. By May, the members were entertaining the possibility of developing a version that provided the text in both the original and updated forms. This proceeded to the point of going back to our test congregations a third time in October 2001 to seek their opinions about this compromise. In a detailed letter dated October 9, 2001, I described this latest iteration of the Page 15 service. Toward the end of the letter, I attempted to demonstrate the competing interests that the committee was attempting to satisfy. Furthermore, I appealed to the larger purpose of cultivating an attitude among the members of our congregations would acknowledge the necessity of accepting the compromises that had to be made:

> Clearly, this is a compromise solution. And as is the case with most compromises, no one is 100% satisfied. Permit me a few personal comments at this point, thoughts that I have shared with the various hymnal committees on numerous occasions. The reality is that no one—not even I—will be completely satisfied with the hymnal when it is finally published. Quite honestly, that is the nature of any hymnal. But in this day and age when everyone can tailor-make their worship just the way they want it, it will be a challenge for all of us to put aside some of our preferences as we receive a common hymnal that faithfully teaches the Word of God and preserves the best of our liturgical heritage.

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[44] The survey results are found in my personal files.

> What does this mean in the concrete? It means that pastors will have to be willing to expend a little "pastoral equity" as they lead their congregations into the new hymnal. Yes, it would be nice if everything could be the same. But if it isn't the same or exactly as "I" would like it to be, then what? In other words, how will we help people adapt to something that is very much the same, but not exactly as they've always done it? In the end, it all boils down to a matter of attitude. For example, I can think of any number of older members in my former parish who learned the *LW* version of the creeds when that book was introduced. I'm sure it was uncomfortable at first, but they put their mind to it and did it. If we were proposing all kinds of changes for no good reason, that would be one thing. But specifically in regard to the proposed revisions to the Page 15 service, the committee is trying to be very careful to balance any number of contradictory goals.[45]

It was this version of the service, with both traditional and updated language, that was published in the 2002 booklet of field test materials that was sent to all congregations of the Synods in compliance with the Synod's bylaws.[46] In the introduction to the revised service, the committee reviewed the several rounds of testing that had been carried out over the previous two-plus years. That introduction is quoted here at length:

> With nearly one-third of LCMS congregations still using *The Lutheran Hymnal* as their only or primary worship book, the Liturgy Committee quickly determined that the Order of Holy Communion, commonly referred to as the "Page 15 Service" would be included in the new hymnal. The committee set about to make a "gentle" revision of the service, leaving the musical setting virtually intact and only updating some of the language. In certain places where updating the language would require changes in the music, the committee resolved to keep the original text (e.g., "Holy Ghost" in the Gloria Patri and the Gloria in Excelsis).
>
> The first revision of the Page 15 Service was tested in about 50 congregations, most of whom used *TLH* regularly. Based on their responses to an extensive survey, revisions were made. The service was then made available to the entire Synod through the commission's Web site. Well over 1,000 individuals downloaded the service,

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[45] This letter is found in my personal files.

[46] At that time, Synod Bylaw 3.929 required synodwide field testing of materials before a resolution could be brought to the Synod convention requesting approval of a hymnal. Thus, in 2001 the Synod passed Resolution 2-06 authorizing the Commission on Worship to conduct a formal testing of materials and to bring a full proposal for the new hymnal to the 2004 Synod convention. *Convention Proceedings*, 2001, 129.

> and 90 congregations responded to a second survey. The committee has now finalized its revisions, which are included in the pages that follow.
>
> Even before its initial field test, the Liturgy Committee expected that the updating of language would generate the most comments. While both surveys indicated that the majority of congregations felt that they could eventually become comfortable with the changes that were proposed, there was still a frustration expressed by some who were fearful of losing a beloved service that has served them for so long. The committee considered simply returning to the language as it is found in *TLH*. But it also wrestled with the fact that many congregations have not used the language of *TLH* for several decades and would most likely not consider using this service if it were printed only in that form.
>
> In both surveys, the respondents indicated that the desire for the traditional language was primarily for the texts in the sung portions of the service. Based on these responses, the committee has chosen to provide updated language in the spoken portions of the service. In the sung portions, both versions of the text will be provided, the *TLH* version printed on top in boldface, and the updated version printed below in italics. While the committee would prefer to avoid providing options, it believes that this proposal of providing both texts will be immediately self-evident to anyone who uses the service and will not cause undue confusion.[47]

The crux of the issue, as described in this communication to the entire Synod, was the challenge of helping congregations currently using *TLH* to find *their* service in the new hymnal. The proposed solution, providing both versions of the text within the musical portions of the service, was the committee's way of still trying to make the service palatable to those congregations that were no longer using the older language.

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[47] *Lutheran Hymnal Project: Field Test Materials 2002* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod), 9; the service itself is found on pages 12–23. These test materials are included in *Lutheran Service Book Historical Records*, vol. 3, *Significant Documents*.

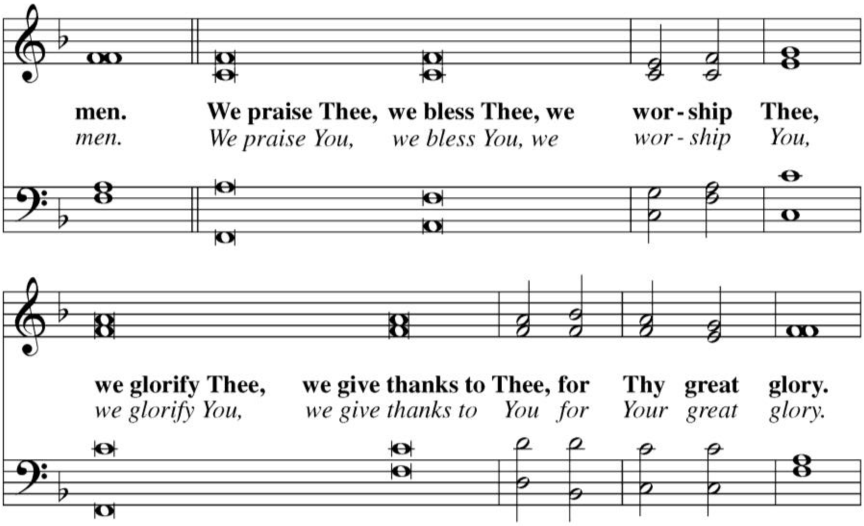

Figure 1: Example of the Gloria in Excelsis with both the original and updated language as it was presented in the 2002 Field Test Materials for the Lutheran Hymnal Project.

Recognizing the danger of confusion that this two-text proposal might create, the Commission asked specifically for a response to that concern. The results were fairly clear: 49% said that it would cause confusion, 41% said no, and 10% said they would not use the service.[48] More helpful, though, were the 185 individual comments that were provided by the respondents. They ranged all the way from "God does understand updated language" to "we will be a BOLD, not ITALICS congregation."[49] The responses were often quite candid, with many expressing frustration that the committee had to go to so much trouble to bring congregations still using *TLH* into the new project:

> I fear that the tone of the Lutheran Hymnal Project betrays more of a longing for familiarity's comfort, bordering on nostalgia, than a concern for the clearest possible communication of the Truth. The restoration of archaic language in liturgy and hymns, except where ABSOLUTELY necessary, can only serve to obscure and distance the Truth.
>
> It is time to just plain update. This revision is just a collected cop out.

[48] *Historical Records*, vol. 4, *Other Documents*, 36.

[49] These and the following comments are found in my personal files.

> Please DO NOT keep the outdated language as an option—any reasonable person should be able to adjust to the minor changes.
>
> It saddens me that, as much as I enjoy TLH 15, we so identify ourself [sic] culturally as a church body with that service.
>
> Our congregation would use this setting very rarely. I believe it's time for the original language to be updated. P. 15 people will not forsake the new hymnal because of the translation. Using both old and new wordings as proposed is confused, and, frankly, plain silly.

Others, however, expressed concerns about the updates. One response, in particular, was quite direct.

> Please consider approaching TLH service as a historical landmark which cannot be remodeled in any way. By all means clean up the format, but leave the service completely intact textually and musically. My congregation has reacted negatively to any proposed changes to this service. Many of us like the so-called "archaic" language, chiefly the use of "thee" and "thou". There would be little objection to the removal of "forgiveth" etc. but the omission of "thee" and "thou" will be noticed and cause offence to many, especially our seniors. What of Matins and Vespers? We prefer TLH versions and hope that they are a part of the hymnal. Please do not alter them other than to change the format to avoid "page flipping."

And still one other comment hit the nail on the head with the pithy observation that this "revision is one generation too late." That was hardly news to the Commission or any of the hymnal committees.

The handwringing was soon to come to an end. At its March 2003 meeting, the Liturgy Committee considered briefly one final option: retaining the original language only in the pew edition of the hymnal, while also providing an updated version that would be available electronically for those congregations that wanted to use the Page 15 service but had no desire to continue with the Jacobean language. The Commission on Worship, however, had heard enough and decided at its April 2003 meeting[50] to abandon the updated language version once and for all and to move ahead with the final form as we have it in *LSB*, with the language updated in just a few spoken sections while any text set to music remains as it appeared in *TLH*, and even before that in *ELHB*.

[50] Minutes, April 7–8, 2003, *Lutheran Service Book Historical Records*, vol. 1, *Commission on Worship Minutes*, 202–203.

IV. Conclusions and Observations

That decision came four years after the Liturgy Committee had first begun its work. Considered from our perspective now, having used the service for nearly a decade, the multiple testings and second-guessing might lead some to conclude that the Liturgy Committee did a lot of wheel-spinning during those long years. While it certainly felt that way at times to those of us who served on the committee, the entire process was, I would say, a necessary one, as the following points hopefully make clear.

First, we were fortunate to have the luxury of time. When the Commission resolved in 1996 to develop a new hymnal, we indicated that we were giving ourselves a decade to complete the work. That extended time, something that the editors of *LW* never had, was essential both for giving the committees time to weigh the pros and cons of various decisions and for allowing the church-at-large the time buy into the project. While the committees sometimes proceeded in a very inefficient manner, first making and then later reversing decisions, the end result, I believe, was almost always for the better of the overall project.

Second, the development of this hymnal occurred at a time when we had technology as a friend. The use of the Internet, not only to conduct committee and Commission business but also to disseminate materials to the church-at-large allowed for far greater input than would have been possible even a decade earlier. In addition, the power and flexibility of desktop publishing enabled us to test both content and layout designs. My colleague Jon Vieker, assistant director of the Commission on Worship, served, among many other roles, as an in-house editor. His ability to put design concepts into reality made it possible for us to fine tune the layout of the services to such a degree that the old complaints about hymnals being confusing were silenced once for all.

Third, before the Liturgy Committee's first meeting, each member recognized that the Page 15 service from *TLH* would have to be included in *LSB* if we were to bring along the 35% of congregations that were still using *TLH* exclusively. While it would take several years to conclude that updating the language throughout the service was not the way to proceed, we all realized very clearly that the excessive changes that had made to this service in *LW* were one of the significant reasons why that hymnal had not received a better reception in the Synod.

Fourth, the committee members believed very strongly that retaining the Common Service was important not just for the congregations that were still using *TLH* but also for the many others that had discontinued using it. It was this conviction that compelled the committee to press so long for updating the language.

Fifth, it took time for the committee members to recognize just where the "red line" had been placed as a result of the *LW* revisions. We were well aware that there was dissatisfaction with the Page 15 revisions in *LW*. What we did not appreciate at first was how this had caused those still using *TLH* to put down their line in the sand fairly close to where they were already standing.[51] Through the multiple testings and (mostly) thoughtful comments we received, we slowly came to acknowledge that the inclusion of this service in *LSB* was chiefly for the *TLH* congregations and that the added benefit would be for others who would choose to use it.

Sixth, and this realization has struck me only while the preparing this study, in all of the comments received from the testing, we rarely if ever heard calls to provide *both* Page 5 and 15 services. The conclusion I draw from this is that the renewed emphasis on more frequent communion, especially as it had been promoted before and during the introduction of *LW*, had moved the needle on the assumption that the full Divine Service of Word *and* Sacrament is the norm among Lutherans. Granted, we are not there yet. But consider that the practice of more frequent communion continues, ever so slowly, to increase.

Seventh, even after the Commission decided to provide only the older translation for the sung portions of the Page 15 service, the issue of the translation of the creeds was yet to be tested, let along decided. The month after the Commission had made its decision, the Liturgy Committee met again and this time urged the Commission to approach the issue of creed translation with great care, even suggesting that perhaps it would be in the best interest of the new hymnal if the *LW* versions of the creed were used throughout rather than going for more extensive revisions, which is where the Commission was leaning at the time.[52]

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[51] I distinctly remember receiving a letter from one layman who insisted that the new hymnal dare not be any taller, wider, thicker, or heavier than *TLH*. Of course, that was easy for him to say, but it is likely that he was not aware that the slightly larger dimensions of *LW* (and eventually *LSB*) allowed the editors to increase the point size of all the text, thus making it easier for those with sight impairments to see the material.

[52] *Historical Records*, vol. 2, *Committee Minutes,* 496. As the Commission would later learn in the firestorm of reactions that it received in its proposal to retranslate "who for us men and for our salvation" to "who for us humans and for our salvation," what was good for the goose was also good for the gander—namely, if there was wisdom and sticking with the older text in the Page 15 service, as the Commission had decided in April 2003, then there was also good reason perhaps not to push the issue of creed

Finally, the comment referenced earlier in response to one of the field tests was spot on: the time to have done a responsible revision of the Page 15 service was twenty-five years too late. I am convinced that in 1982 most of our congregations would have accepted a gentle updating of the Jacobean English, especially if the familiar melodies of the service had not been changed. The church's liturgical rites are ever in flux, as they must be. But if that change is forced upon the faithful without consideration for the long-term memory and appreciation that the people have for the church's heritage, we ought not be surprised by the negative reaction that sometimes comes.

What, then, does this mean for the future? When the next hymnal revision comes, I really do not foresee an attempt to make any substantive changes to the Page 15 service, or what we should really now be referring to as Divine Service, Setting Three. Perhaps if that hymnal project is far enough in the future, memories of the frustrations brought on by *LW* will have faded sufficiently for the Synod to step back and take an honest appraisal of the situation. In the meantime, it seems to me that those congregations that are still using *TLH* really need to step back themselves and ask whether perhaps the careful and conservative revisions found in Setting Three are sufficient for them to adopt *LSB*. In the past nine years, well over 1,000 congregations have made that move away from *TLH*. Surely it would be in the best interest of all that those still using *TLH* do the same so that when the next hymnal comes off the presses, we will all be on the same page, singing the same song.

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translation. Trial balloons, it turns out, often serve a useful function, if only to be promptly shot down!

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Ascending to God: The Cosmology of Worship in the Old Testament

Jeffrey H. Pulse

You go up to heaven and you go down to hell . . . and here on earth you are stuck somewhere in between. The language of ascending to heaven/God and descending to hell/Satan is an Old Testament Hebrew understanding of the world and its arrangement. As John Davies writes: "Going upward and going downward implies a cosmology, a spatial and a moral division of the universe. In Hebrew cosmology the earth is located underneath heaven and above Sheol, Hades or hell—the underworld."[1] With such an understanding of the world and its spatial division, one should expect it to have a profound effect on the worship of Israel, especially since worship takes place on earth, in between heaven and hell. Such a cosmology should even be expected to influence and inform the Israelite understanding of their relationship with God.

We first see evidence of this cosmology of the universe in the Tower of Babel account of Genesis 11: "And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower . . . 'Come, let us go down and there confuse their language'" (11:5, 7). Obviously, the Lord must be up in order to come down. Also, "the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Gen 19:24), "the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven" (Gen 21:17), "the angel of the Lord called to him [Abraham] from heaven" (Gen 22:11), and God is called "the Lord, the God of heaven" (Gen 24:7). There is also Jacob's dream of a ladder (a solid object of some sort that anchors heaven to earth): "And, behold the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the Lord stood above it" (Gen 28:12–13).[2] All of these instances from the earlier Genesis accounts

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[1] Jon Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 88.

[2] Luther identifies the ladder as the cross, probably in light of John 1:51. See Martin Luther, *Luther's Works,* American Edition, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav J. Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1986), 5:243.

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indicate the presence of the particular aspect of ancient Israelite cosmology that understands God and heaven to be up above. This reality becomes even more apparent, for example, as the Hebrew Scriptures progress historically with Elijah being taken up into heaven (1 Kgs 2:1, 11).

The converse is also evidenced with the first appearance of the word שְׁאוֹל in Genesis 37. Jacob, in sorrow and distress at the apparent death of Joseph, lamented, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning" (Gen 37:35). And again, when Judah feared the loss of Benjamin, he said, "as soon as he [Jacob] sees the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol" (Gen 44:31).

While much has been written concerning Sheol, Reed Lessing, in an excursus in his *Jonah Commentary*, provides a clear and concise explanation of its meaning in the Old Testament:

> The KJV frequently translates Sheol as "hell" because it is portrayed so often as the destination of the wicked. Theologically, Sheol is the opposite of Yahweh's presence. It is the lowest point, the cosmological opposite of the highest heavens. "Sheol" is characteristically "the land of forgetfulness" (Ps 88:13 [ET 88:12]), where people are cut off from Yahweh and forgotten. Sheol is a fitting place for the wicked, who in life forgot God.[3]

In the Old Testament, when a man was in distress or sorrow, or when he was evil and ungodly, he faced the reality of descending to Sheol. However, when a man died a noble, faithful, and peaceful death, he rested with his ancestors or was "gathered to his people" (Gen 25:8, 17). Once again, heaven was above and hell, or Sheol, was beneath.

This cosmology, which is implied by going down and going up, is also evident in the early journeys of the patriarchs and, later, of young Israel. Earthly movement frequently reflects spiritual realities. In the Torah, we observe this movement in the downward and upward language of going down to Egypt and up to the Promised Land. This wording is not a geographical reference to north and south positions on a map, nor is it a geological comment concerning the highlands and the lowlands.[4] This

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[3] R. Reed Lessing, *Jonah*, Concordia Commentary Series (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007), 251.

[4] Nahum Sarna disagrees, concluding that the language of going down and going up is standard for describing the journey from hilly Canaan to low-lying Egypt. Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis,* The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 93.

language begins early in the patriarchal narratives with Abram in Genesis 12 and 13. From this point on in Genesis, the reference is always a downward movement to Egypt and an upward movement to Canaan. In Genesis 12:10, Abram went down to Egypt due to a famine. When the famine was over in Genesis 13:1, Abram went up from Egypt. Once this pattern was established early in Abram's life, we see it repeated again and again. The patriarch Isaac is never recorded as going down to Egypt, but at the time of another famine God clearly instructed him, "Do not go down to Egypt" (Gen 26:2).

This movement is immediately established in the Joseph narratives when the older brothers of Joseph looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites going down to Egypt. The result was Joseph's descent into the land of Egypt.[5] This language is used repeatedly because of the three trips of Joseph's brothers from Canaan to Egypt. Also, in God's only speaking role in these narratives, he reiterated this theme. When Jacob stopped at Beersheba on his way to be reunited with Joseph, God spoke to him in a vision saying, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes" (Gen 46:3–4). Thus, when Jacob died in Egypt with Joseph by his side, Joseph carried out the promise to bury Jacob in Canaan. The language is repetitive in the extreme as Joseph approached Pharaoh, "'Now therefore, let me please go up and bury my father. Then I will return.' And Pharaoh answered, 'Go up, and bury your father, as he made you swear.' So Joseph went up to bury his father. With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh . . . and there went up with him both chariots and horsemen" (Gen 50:5–9). Finally, Joseph gathered his brothers as he was about to die and told them, "I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.' Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, 'God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here'" (50:24–25).

Later, when the Lord called Moses and tasked him with leading his people out of Egypt, he told Moses, "I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod 3:8). What is it, then, that distinguishes Egypt as a place to which one goes down? Throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, Egypt is referred to in a

[5] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 4; George W. Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976), 92.

negative way. King after king was warned not to turn to Egypt for help against other nations (Isa 19; 20:2–6; Jer 2; 43–44; Hos 7:11; 12:2; Ezek 29–32). The prophet Ezekiel called Egypt a broken reed of a staff that pierces the hand (Ezek 29:6–8). Egypt was spoken of as the worst of the foreign nations, the most evil until the time it was replaced by the whore of Babylon (Revelation 17–18). Perhaps this is due to the multiplicity of gods worshiped or the highly developed cult of the dead; whatever the reason, nothing good could come from making an alliance with this nation, and a journey there was a trip down into the depths of the pit.

Canaan, on the other hand, was the Promised Land spoken of in the Abrahamic covenant. This Promised Land also became a euphemism for the courts of heaven, so it makes perfect sense in light of Hebrew cosmology that one should go up to the Promised Land. In many ways, going up to the Promised Land of Canaan was only the first step of this upward movement. One also went up to Jerusalem and then up to the temple, and finally, up to heaven itself—the ultimate Promised Land. The idea was a step-by-step ascension to the dwelling place and presence of God.

It is important to note briefly at this point the presence of God. In order for God to be present with man, in order for him to walk with man, in order for him to dwell with, commune with, and be in relationship with man, God must come down. God must descend from heaven to walk in the Garden of Eden. He came down to look at the Tower of Babel. He descended in cloud and fire to take up residence in the tabernacle and temple, which became the dwelling place of God on earth.

From the perspective of the New Testament and the Christian church, we see this movement best explained by the creed as it shows the path of Christ. As Arthur Just writes:

> This movement from heaven to earth to heaven is described in the transfiguration as Jesus' "exodus" He is about to fulfill in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31) as He dies on the cross, descends into the earth in the tomb, rises out of the earth and ascends back to heaven. This is the new exodus, where Jesus does what Israel did not and could not do throughout the Old Testament. Jesus' journey from heaven to earth to heaven may be pictured as a divine invasion from one world into another world that knew Him not and then back to the world from which He came.[6]

[6] Arthur A. Just Jr., *Heaven on Earth* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2008), 151.

Christ's incarnation was God descending to be with his people on this earth, his death was a descent into the grave. His descent continued into hell. His resurrection was a return to the earth. His journey was completed with his ascension back to heaven. From heaven to earth to hell to earth to heaven—Christ's journey demonstrates further with language and movement the Old Testament cosmology and the location of God and the evil one.

Before Christ's incarnation, this threefold, three-stage movement acted itself out in various ways that are no less meaningful for instilling knowledge and understanding of God's relationship with his chosen people, how God comes to man, and how one approaches God in worship. For instance, the use of three days as a time period of separation culminating in a restoration has early beginnings in the Scriptures. In the account of Abraham's call to offer up his son Isaac (the Akedah), the journey from their home to the place of sacrifice was a three-day journey, and Abraham had faith that the Lord would provide and restore his son to him (Heb 11:17–19). And so it happened as God stayed Abraham's hand and provided a ram for the sacrifice (Genesis 22). Joshua, as he prepared to lead the people into the Promised Land of Canaan, waited three days before the priests were commanded to carry the Ark of the Covenant into the Jordan. The waters heaped up (Josh 3:13), and at the end of three days the people were standing in the Promised Land, restored to their covenantal heritage. The prophet Jonah, in an attempt to flee his God-given task, ended up in the belly of a great fish for three days and three nights before he was restored to dry ground as the fish regurgitated him upon the shore (Jonah 1:17).

All of these three-day separation and restoration texts intersected in the life of Christ as he was laid in the tomb for three days before rising from the dead, restored to life. Christ himself made reference to these intersections when he told the people, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19), and when asked for a sign he declared that the only sign they would receive was the "sign of Jonah" (Matt 12:38–40).

Perhaps even more important for the life of the Old Testament people, certainly more important for their worship life, were the three stages of separation. The first important occurrence of this is found in Genesis 12, where Abram is called by God. The text clearly speaks of a threefold separation: "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you'" (Gen 12:1). These three degrees or stages of separation were later mirrored in the life of Joseph as he was taken from his country, his kindred, and his father's house to the land of Egypt. Another significant example of the three stages of separation (as well as the "ascending to God" movement) is in the Mount Sinai account of Exodus 24. The people of Israel were instructed to remain at the foot of the mountain while Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders went to banquet with God. In Exodus 24:12, however, God instructed Moses to come up further, for, as we read in Exodus 24:2, "Moses alone shall come near to the Lord, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him."

What purpose do these three stages of separation serve and where does one find the restoration? The answer lies in the priesthood and the structure of the tabernacle and temple. When God established the priesthood from the tribe of Levi, there was a clear distinction between the priests and the rest of the Israelites. The priests were set apart/separated in order to accomplish the tasks that lead to reunion and restoration.[7] Note, however, the three degrees or stages: not only concerning the people—Israel, the priests, and the high priest—but even the floor plan of the tabernacle and temple with the court, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Each stage brought one closer to the presence of the Holy One and required greater degrees of purification and atonement. John Kleinig uses the language of holiness, explaining that the unholy cannot come into the presence of God who is holy.[8] So, the separation was a result of being profane, or unholy. The various rituals associated with Old Testament worship centered around the restoration of the unholy with the Holy. Michael Morales, in regard to the tabernacle, notes that "[i]ts three zones of intensifying holiness (outer courtyard, holy Place, holy of holies) corresponded respectively to the mountain of God's base, midsection, and peak, a symbolism naturally generating the question of who may approach (ascend)."[9] Then, in regards to the priesthood, he writes:

> [T]hat the priest is defined as one who stands before the divine Presence appears plausible. This is, of course, especially the case with the high priest whose "special status" emerges from the entire structure of the priestly cult according to which only the High Priest may minister inside the tent of meeting, before the ark, whereas ordinary priests may officiate only outside the tent, that is, his special status

[7] The entire sacrificial system was about reunion and restoration; this is seen most clearly in the institution of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16.

[8] See John Kleinig, *The Glory and the Service* (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2004), 32–47.

[9] L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus* (Leuven: Peters, 2012), 261–262.

> emerges from his being the sole ascender to the (typological) mount's summit, the "who" in the question: "Who may ascend the mount of YHWH?"[10]

Even in the materials used to construct the tabernacle and the temple we witness three stages, each bringing one closer to God. Menahem Haran goes into great detail concerning grades of sanctity as one approaches the Holy One as well as the materials used to construct the tabernacle and temple. He even divides the prohibitions of this holy place into three; touch, sight, and approach.[11] We note briefly the metals of bronze, silver, and gold and the curtains dyed scarlet, purple, and blue and how they showed the stages of holiness by means of the costliness of the materials. The closer to the Holy One, the more expensive the materials used.

Later, when the people were established in the Promised Land and Solomon had completed construction of the temple, we see three stages represented by the land of Israel, Jerusalem, and the temple. The closer one came to the Holy City and the shining jewel of its temple, the closer one came to the Holy One of Israel. This progression continued as one entered the temple itself, where the Holy of Holies was off limits to everyone but the high priest and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement. It is important to remember that it was the rituals that took place in the temple, and especially those carried out behind the veil of the Holy of Holies, that served to restore the Israelites in the eyes of God. Every step of the journey to the Holy of Holies was an ascent; thus, the Israelites viewed the journey as ascending to the Holy One of Israel.

They went up to the Promised Land . . . and up to Jerusalem . . . and up to the temple. They ascended the steps to the court into the Holy Place and looked upon the Holy of Holies. In the relationship with the Holy One, there is almost always movement involved. Although God descended to dwell with His people, the people went up to worship God and be in his presence. Morales writes insightfully concerning this movement:

> At the heart of the theology of the Bible is the kernel of its principle theme: dwelling in the divine Presence, a theme that sprouts up and branches out in various directions yet is never severed from its root. This theme is given historical movement and literary expression through a particular pattern of approaching God: through the

[10] Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-figured*, 262–263.

[11] Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 149–174.

> waters→to the mountain of God→for "worship"—that is, for the abundant life of the divine Presence.[12]

Reed Lessing notes that Sheol represents separation from Yahweh, a deplorable destiny, and that since the essence of life to an Israelite is the ability to worship Yahweh in his presence, one must ascend from the depths into the divine presence or be excluded from his blessings of grace and mercy.[13] How this ascension takes place is addressed by Morales. The journey he describes is definitely an upward movement, but what distinguishes his work is the identification of a pattern with water:

> Throughout this work we will develop a particular pattern in the Hebrew Bible of going through the waters to the mountain of God for worship: the earth is delivered through the primal waters and Adam is brought to the Eden mount (Gen 1–3); Noah is delivered through the deluge waters and brought to the Ararat mount (Gen 6–9); Israel is delivered through the sea waters and brought to Sinai's mount (Exod 14–24, etc.). This significant pattern may also be traced in Exodus 2–3, where Moses, foreshadowing the exodus of Israel, is delivered through the waters of the Nile and brought to Mount Horeb; in the cosmic journey portrayed in the Song of the Sea (Exod 15); and, more broadly, in the general ensuing history of Israel: brought through the waters of the Jordan River to Mount Zion/Jerusalem for worship (Solomon's temple). Furthermore, the *todah* and lament psalms, often describing the individual's deliverance via the archetypal geography of being rescued from the death of *Sheol* and brought to the heights of the divine Presence at the temple, may also be said to conform to this pattern.[14]

This extended quotation points to a strong pattern, not to mention vivid imagery, that is present in the pages of the Scriptures. We could add Elijah's parting of the Jordan River to be taken up into the divine presence as well as Elisha returning through the waters back to the Promised Land, its Mount Zion, and God's dwelling presence there.

This "cosmic mountain ideology" is important in both Old and New Testament Scriptures and has been examined by several scholars.[15] It is

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[12] Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-figured*, 1.

[13] Lessing, *Jonah*, 251.

[14] Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-figured*, 4–5.

[15] See, for example, Gary A. Anderson, "The Cosmic Mountain: Eden and Its Early Interpreters in Syriac Christianity," in *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Exegesis: Intrigue in the Garden*, ed. Gregory A. Robins (Lewton, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1988): 187–224.

usually viewed as a subset of the theology of the divine presence and as overlapping temple theology.[16] The cosmic mountain concept involves, broadly, the ideas that the mountain is sacred, the dwelling place of God, the intersection between heaven and earth, and the central and highest place of the world.[17]

This prompts questions. Who may ascend the mountain of God? Who is worthy? Who is holy enough to ascend? As David puts it, "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully" (Ps 24:4). Again, Morales: "Given the assumed cosmic geography, surviving the 'river ordeal . . . may perhaps be seen as a prerequisite for the ascent of worship—while the wicked are judged via the waters and consigned to *Sheol,* the righteous are brought safely through the waters to the mount of the divine Presence."[18]

As John Walton points out, "[a] culture's cosmic geography plays a significant role in shaping its worldview and offers explanations for the things we observe and experience."[19] Therefore, Israel's cosmology should affect their worldview and, thereby, their worship. Because the Lord has provided this unique movement as the way in which his people may approach his presence, worship reflects this cosmology. This can be seen in God's tabernacle instructions to Moses on Mount Sinai, and the temple and temple worship likewise reflect this. Even before Sinai there is evidence that the patriarchs and early Israelites carried out communication with God in a manner that reflects this cosmology.

Separation from God could have deadly consequences, and in the patriarchal narratives, this separation was intimately tied to the Promised Land. As W.D. Davies suggests, to be separated from the land was to be removed from the covenant, which could result in a removal from the presence of God. So, to go down to Egypt was to abandon the Promised Land. Thus, Jacob sought God's assurance that the Lord goes with him, as did Jacob when he ran from Esau and journeyed to his Uncle Laban. He received God's promise that the Lord would journey with him, that there would be no separation. Davies writes, "Of all the promises made to the patriarchs, it was that of The Land that was most prominent and decisive.

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[16] Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-figured*, 3.

[17] Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-figured*, 2.

[18] Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-figured*, 36.

[19] John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 166.

It is the linking together of the promise to the patriarchs *with* the fulfillment of its settlement that gives the Hexateuch its distinctive theological character."[20] In reality, this connection of the Promised Land with being in the presence of God never ends. Instead, it took on fuller dimension with the addition of the Holy City of Jerusalem and the temple therein. This was the struggle faced by the people when they were in exile. The apocalyptic prophecies of Ezekiel, for example, resulted from the visions God gave him of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as he sat in exile in Babylon. Psalm 137, a lament of the Israelites in Babylonian exile, demonstrates the pain and confusion of the people. Where is the God of Israel? How can we sing his song in a foreign land? How long will we be separated from his presence? Indeed, these are painful questions.

The Scriptures are replete with passages concerning "high places" as places of worship. Long before Moses and Mount Sinai, the patriarchs sought visions, dreams, and revelation from God at holy high spots. Two that are most familiar are Bethel and Beersheba. These appear to be acceptable and encouraged places to seek the Lord, and the patriarchs do just that. Jacob went to a certain place—Luz/Bethel—to spend the night in hope that the Lord will visit him and there experienced his dream concerning the ladder. Later, when summoned to Egypt to be reunited with his son Joseph, he sought out Beersheba to receive the Lord's permission and promise.

There were, however, rules, laws, and mandates against other high places—mandates that were violated by the people on a regular basis. The Lord told Moses, "'Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places'" (Num 33:51–52). Likewise, Moses addressed the people before they entered the Promised Land and told them, "You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree" (Deut 12:2). Obviously, having these instructions did not guarantee that they would be followed. Even the great and wise King Solomon, early in his career, failed to avoid the high places:

> The people were sacrificing at the high places, however, because no house had yet been built for the name of the Lord. Solomon loved the

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[20] W. D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 13.

> Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. (1 Kgs 3:2–3)

Israel was not the only nation to share the cosmology of God being "up," but there is one interesting and very significant difference: the other nations had gods both up and down. The distinguishing feature for Israel is summed up in Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one." One God, and he dwells on the heights! Therefore, psalms are sung as the Israelites process to the holy mountain. "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps 121:1–2). "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!' Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up" (Ps 122:1–4). "To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!" (Ps 123:1). "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!" (Ps 130:1). "For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place" (Ps 132:13). "Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the Lord! May the Lord bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth!" (Ps 134:2–3). All these quotations are from the Psalms of Ascent (120–134) and were the prescribed chants for ascending to the presence of God.

In worship, hands were lifted up to the Lord as the people sought his grace and mercy. Incense and sacrifices were burned, and the smoke and aroma carried up to the nostrils of God, as apparent in several texts. "Let my prayers be counted as incense before you and the lifting up my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps 141:2). "And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel" (Rev 8:4). "Answer me quickly, O Lord! My spirit fails! Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit. Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul" (Ps 143:7–8).

And so it is to the heights that one ascended to seek the face of the Lord and dwell in the divine presence of the Most High God. "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights! . . . Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven" (Ps 148:1, 13). The movement was up to the Promised Land, up to the Holy City of Jerusalem, and up to the Temple Mount. Then the priests ascended to the sacrificial altar, and the people ascended to the courts of the temple proper. This upward movement focused their attention toward the Holy of Holies, where the Lord God had descended to dwell with his people. The temple became that place suspended between heaven and earth, where man encountered the Divine and where the Holy One bestowed his gracious presence upon man. "O Lord, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells" (Ps 26:8).

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Matthew as the Foundation for the New Testament Canon

David P. Scaer

I. Bias and the Interpretation of the Scriptures

By regarding the Scriptures as ordinary and not divinely inspired documents, Baruch Spinoza (1631–1677) relieved biblical studies from the burden of proving the veracity of church doctrine and so became a father of historical criticism. By the dawn of the twentieth century, historical critics had come to such diverse and contradictory conclusions about who Jesus was that Albert Schweitzer concluded that historical-critical scholars would never find the real Jesus, though he reserved a few thoughts about Jesus for himself.[1] In spite of their claims to being *wissenschaftlich*, biblical scholars today are no more immune to cultural bias than anyone else, and their claim to use scientific methods with assured results can be a pretense for advancing cultural biases, often with a political agenda. At the root of any historical-critical method is a proposition or philosophical axiom that is assumed to be true but cannot be proven—and of course this, too, is an axiom. The same might be said of any theology.

Markan Priority as Protestant Bias

For the last century, many seminary and college students have been taught the two-source hypothesis, which says that Mark was the first Gospel and that Matthew and Luke used Mark along with the putative Q document, so-named from the first letter of the German word *Quelle,* meaning "source." No theory has ever been so perfect as to handle every discrepancy in its hypothesis, so scholars proposed Q1, Q2, and Q3, as well as prior forms of Mark. Since it is proposed that Q can be found in Mark, it might be impossible to separate the chaff from the wheat. Markan priority is so set in stone that scholars rarely bother to demonstrate it, and challenging it is comparable to heresy.

[1] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of the Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. F.C. Burkitt (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962).

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This, however, is exactly what the late David Laird Dungan did in his book *A History of the Synoptic Problem*. He argues that biblical studies have never been immune to cultural intrusion. He writes, "My experience has taught me that biblical scholars think their work is free of cultural, political, and economic ends. It is one of the main concerns of this entire book . . . to show this has never been true."[2] His observation should have upset the apple cart of New Testament studies, but, like J. A. T. Robinson's *Redating the New Testament,* it did not. By being ignored, it was consigned to a bloodless assassination. Had either of these scholars been given their day in court, mountains of books would have walked themselves into the fires of the Inquisition.

Culture on the March

From the post-apostolic period up until the last part of the nineteenth century, Matthew was universally held as the first Gospel. Even Friedrich Schleiermacher and the Rationalists were on board with this view, but German cultural winds changed direction in the nineteenth century. Anti-Semitism was popular among the German intelligentsia, and a desire for a unified nation under Prussia was fertile soil for a German Christianity, especially when combined with a dislike for the Jews, a view already proposed by David Friedrich Strauss in his radical book, *Das Leben Jesu*.[3] Grounds for this bias had been laid by the German theologian of choice, Schleiermacher, who dismissed the Old Testament as lacking in the God-consciousness that is found in the more highly developed New Testament. For him, the Old Testament was too Jewish, and "whatever is most definitely Jewish has the least value."[4] Jesus' teachings could, therefore, have been explained by his God-consciousness and not by his Jewish descent.

At the end of the century, Adolf von Harnack, who took Schleiermacher's place of honor, commended Luther's courage in rejecting Roman Catholicism, but he faulted him for not doing the same to the Old Testament. Marcion had come back to life and was now speaking German! The march toward a better Christianity free of everything Jewish fit the Hegelian culture in which Darwin saw the perfection of an amoeba evolving into human life, and Marx laid down the terms for an ideal society. This provided the cultural climate for Heinrich Julius Holtzmann to ad-

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[2] David Laird Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 339.

[3] Its four editions between 1835 and 1840 had great influence. David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu kritisch bearbeitet,* 4 eds. (Tübingen: C.F. Osiander, 1835–1840).

[4] Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem*, 339.

vance his theory that the shorter Mark was the first Gospel. When comparing pericopes, Mark is arguably more theological than Matthew and surpasses Luke in minute details. These arguments suggest that it was last of the synoptic Gospels and not the first, yet for scholars following Holtzmann, Mark's length trumps its other characteristics.

The Birth of Markan Priority in the German Cultural Milieu

Holtzmann's goal of rescuing Jesus as a historical figure from Strauss's hypothesis resulted in his conclusion that Jesus' miracles were myths. His proposal that Mark was the first Gospel provided support for Prussia's aims to create a Protestant German empire.[5] By taking the honor of the first Gospel away from Matthew, Holtzmann weakened the value that Matthew 16:18–19 put forth for papal supremacy. Suspect now were the words, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven"—words etched in Latin into the marble dome over the altar in St. Peter's Basilica. If Matthew could no longer be considered the earliest Christian Gospel, the claims of Rome to supremacy would be weakened, and by extension the territorial designs of the Catholic Austro-Hungarian Empire would be undermined. By 1860, German universities were caught up in promoting nationalism. Holtzmann's liberal political views were reason enough to deny him a university position, but by agreeing to curtail his activities, the Kaiser allowed his appointment to the University of Strasbourg.

Groundwork for pushing Matthew to the back of the line had been set in motion before Holtzmann. As mentioned, Schleiermacher held that the Jewishness of the Old Testament made it a religiously inferior book. He accepted the widely held view that Matthew was first, but his heart belonged to John. Had he recognized the Jewishness of Matthew, an argument that suggests that it was the first Gospel, he may have disposed of it altogether or at least seen it as a sub-Christian book. Today Markan priority is common coin,[6] even for conservative scholars who as members of

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[5] For a discussion on how the German imperial government worked to conflate Protestantism with German national identity, see Stan M. Landry, *Ecumenism, Memory, & German Nationalism, 1817–1917* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014). For a discussion of the search for the history of Jesus, see Carl E. Braaten, "Martin Kahler (1835–1912)," *Lutheran Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (2014): 401–422.

[6] For example, see Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 86.

the Evangelical Theological Society annually pledge themselves to biblical inspiration and inerrancy.[7] Too much scholarship rests on Markan priority to allow its recension. Holtzmann's proposal that Mark was the first Gospel found wings in the culture of his times and was kept aloft among shifting scholarly currents. Should Dungan's proposal that culture influences biblical studies seem out of line, consider that the agenda of the Society of Biblical Literature is more and more devoted to environmental, feminist, and gay causes,[8] and that courses on these topics are commonly found in seminary curricula. Culture is again calling the tune. Once on the faculty of Strasbourg, Holtzmann worked for a unified Protestant Prussian empire, helped found the Protestant Union that opposed Roman Catholic influences, and even ran for political office. American college and university faculties are no less politically biased than German ones in the nineteenth century.

Did the Prussians Put Their Money on the Wrong Horse?

Foremost in the Prussian political designs was challenging the expansion of the Catholic Austro-Hungarian Empire into the German states. Their goal for a Protestant empire could be advanced by showing that Matthew, on which the Catholic claim to the primacy of Peter was based, did not represent the earliest Christianity. Canonicity was an afterthought. But was this argument that Matthew is more favorable to Peter than Mark foolproof? In all of the Gospels, Peter is the most prominent figure in comparison to the other apostles, so counting the number of times he is mentioned is inconclusive. If one considers the percentage of occurrences, Peter dominates the shorter Mark. What is significant is Mark's resurrection account wherein Peter is given a special place in the promulgation of the gospel. He is singled out from the other disciples: "But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee" (Mark 16:7). Had the German Protestants read Mark more carefully, they might have seen that Mark did not really serve their political designs.[9]

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[7] Michael F. Bird presents the wide field of options on the origins of the Gospels, but in the end he sees Mark as a source for Matthew and Luke. Michael F. Bird, *The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 240–243.

[8] The 2014 Annual Meeting Program lists the following units: Ecological Hermeneutical Section and LGBT/Queer Hermeneutics Section. Among the listed affiliates are the *Journal of Feminist Religious Studies* and four seminars on the Qu'ran.

[9] Any hint that Peter does not hold first place is removed by John (21:1–23) and Paul (1 Cor 15:5).

Historical Criticism and the Need for "Something"

In spite of the damage inflicted by methods marching under the banner of historical criticism, the approach without the anti-supernatural bias and cultural infection has a valid purpose in reaching into the past. How things really happened, *wie es eigentlich geschehen ist*, may be beyond our grasp, but we do have a stake in showing that certain things really did happen. Fundamental to a religion of the incarnation is that there was a "something" that happened, a *Geschehen*, and that the "something" was Jesus of Nazareth.[10] Without this prior historical conviction, we cannot hear his claims to divinity. Remove the tangible "something," and Christianity crumbles into another religion or philosophy. Since historical critics have not agreed among themselves on how things really happened, if indeed they happened at all, they have escaped to source criticism, redaction criticism, narrative criticism, rhetorical criticism, and canon criticism. These criticisms are not entirely without value, but they avoid coming to terms with the historical character of the Gospels and the person of Jesus. These methods fit the definition of critical, but they are not historical.[11]

The goal of historical criticism to determine *wie es eigentlich geschehen ist* might have been the reason for the creation of the Gospel harmonies by Theophilus of Antioch in the second century, then Tatian, and then by John Calvin and Martin Chemnitz in the sixteenth century. All Gospel harmonies are suspect. Consider the claims of one compiler of a harmony, that his "arrangement is designed to make more readily available the material found in the Gospels, and so to make it more interesting and reward the time spent in Bible study."[12] This says it all. Compilers of Gospel harmonies share common ground with historical critics who tried to determine *wie es eigentlich geschehen ist* and in effect created a "fifth Gospel." Creators of Gospel harmonies fail to recognize that each Gospel is not only a historical narrative but is each evangelist's unique theological creation. Not to be left unmentioned is that these harmonies are done in the vernacular and not the Greek, as is the basis for many of the arguments offered

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[10] So also Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI) says, "The first point is that the historical-critical method—specifically because of the intrinsic nature of theology and faith—is and remains an indispensable dimension of exegetical work. For it is of the very essence of biblical event to be about real historical events." Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), xv.

[11] For a helpful summary of these criticisms see James D.G. Dunn, *The Oral Gospel Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 350–359.

[12] Quoted from Charles E. Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels? Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 109.

for Markan priority. Had Gospels harmonies and the arguments for Markan priority been advanced solely on the basis of the Greek, their practitioners might have discovered that their conclusions were less certain.[13]

Should Mark be found to have been the last of the Synoptic Gospels, he may actually have created the first Gospel harmony—not in the sense of blending differing accounts into one, but by excluding in his Gospel items not found in both Matthew and Luke and by editing the remaining material. Even if he depended on Matthew and Luke, his Gospel was his own literary and theological creation. It was not a Gospel harmony in the modern sense.

II. Was There a First Gospel?

If we agree with Bo Reicke that the Synoptic evangelists accessed oral tradition without any taking note of a previously written Gospel, we do not have to ask who wrote the first Gospel. Oral tradition may not have been as scattered as Bultmann proposes, but claiming that three writers at the same time came up with the same idea of writing a Gospel with the same outline is so coincidental as to be unconvincing. A doctrine of inspiration in which the Spirit alone supplies the words—thus eliminating the historical component—makes the questions of who wrote the Gospels and what their order of composition was extraneous, or at least secondary. Seeing the character of the Gospels determined alone by the Spirit circumvents the *filioque* that the Spirit proceeds from the Son and is given to the church by Jesus through the apostles. The Spirit brings Jesus' words to memory.

Gospels: Personal Testimonies or Corporate Authority?

Each Gospel, including John, resembles the others, and no Gospel could be mistaken for an Epistle. Hebrews is a theological Gospel posing as an Epistle. Revelation takes all the horror stories of the judgment found in Matthew and puts them together into one book. If we are agreed that there was a first Gospel, the next question is whether its writer was aware that he was breaking new ground, writing something no one had written before. This question must now be addressed to each evangelist. Saying that all the books in the world could not contain everything Jesus did, the author of the Fourth Gospel suggests that some existing books may have begun the task (John 21:24–25). This may be a reaction to Matthew's claim

[13] Mark Goodacre, "A Flaw in McIver and Carroll's Experiments to Determine Written Sources in the Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133 (2014): 793–800.

that the disciples have at their disposal all the things Jesus had taught, and so John wrote a Gospel because there was more to say. If John is the beloved disciple (John 13:23), he claims for himself access to Jesus that even Peter did not have. Hints that he and not Peter was the last surviving witness to what Jesus did and said serve to confirm the value of his Gospel (John 21:21–24). John offers something more than the tradition derived from Peter that provided the substance of the Synoptic Gospels. Like John, Luke is also a solo performance, but unlike John, Luke was not an eyewitness and had to depend on others. Neither John nor Luke give any hint that he speaks with community authority. Mark gives no clear-cut reason for why he composed a document about Jesus, unless one counts his document's first word "Gospel." Defining the word "Gospel" by itself might be circular reasoning, but Mark may have been assuming that his recipients had known Matthew or Luke and were thus acquainted with the literary form that would come to be known as "Gospel." Hence, what Mark had written was not entirely new to those who heard it. Without his hearers having prior knowledge of Jesus' conception, birth, and resurrection from oral tradition or written documents, Mark is inadequate.

Matthew: What Did He Think He Was Doing?

From the earliest post-apostolic sources onward, Matthew was revered as the first evangelist, a view held by most until the middle of the nineteenth century. Now, the canonical task is coming to terms with his self-understanding of what he thought he was doing. Culture played a role in how the New Testament was written, and Matthew's world was little different from what Jesus knew, except that with the inevitability of Jerusalem's destruction, the eschatological climate had become more intense. As Hellenized as Judea had become under the Herods and Pilate, the Pharisees had what they thought was their God-given duty to ensure that the piety of the people was permeated with devotion to Torah. However, Jesus said that he was not only the Old Testament's content but also its author, so he presented himself as the final arbiter of its meaning. He was the incarnate Torah—the Word of God in the flesh. This set up the arena for conflict. All four Gospels show marks of the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees, but Matthew best presents Jesus within that culture.

After Mark tips his hat to the Old Testament by conflating Malachi and Isaiah in order to introduce John the Baptist, of whom he makes short shrift (Mark 1:2–3), he presents his case that Jesus is the Christ by showing that Isaiah (Isa 6:9–10) had spoken of the unbelief that Jesus confronted (Mark 3:12). Luke's Gospel is thoroughly embedded with Old Testament language and references, perhaps more so than the other three Gospels.

Consider how he begins: Elizabeth's inability to conceive has an uncanny resemblance to Sarah. That said, Luke does not match Matthew as a biblical expositor. Luke's two accounts of how the resurrected Jesus interprets all the Scriptures, first on the way to Emmaus (24:26) and then in Jerusalem (24:44–45), leave the hearers in the dark, not knowing what Scriptures these might have been or what he said about them. Like the Synoptic evangelists, John uses Isaiah 40:3 to introduce the Baptist, but further Old Testament references are meager and, in comparison to Matthew, come up short in citation and interpretation. Even if one does not grasp Matthew's interpretation of the Old Testament, he is its interpreter par excellence.

For example, Matthew concludes from Isaiah 7:14 that Jesus is God and finds in the prophecy of Micah 5:2 the reason for the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (Matt 2:6). Jesus' return from exile in Egypt was already set in motion by the Exodus (Hos 11:1; Matt 2:13), and the slaughter of the infants had its roots in Judah's being taken into captivity in Babylonia (Jer 31:15; Matt 2:18). Jesus' ministry in Galilee is the restitution of the Northern Kingdom (Isa 9:2; Matt 4:15–16). Matthew's obsession with the Old Testament strikes the reader through his introduction that is not so much a genealogy, as Luke might have thought, but an abridged recapitulation of Israel's history in which the reader's attention is called to David, God's faithful king, who now appears as Jesus, as well as to the Babylonian captivity, affirming that judgment will come on those who do not take Jesus' words seriously.

Matthew as the Most Catholic of the Gospels

Each evangelist intended his Gospel for the entire church. They were not private documents, but Mark, Luke, and John present their Gospels as the products of one author with little suggestion that they emerged from or were authorized by a community of believers. But Matthew does. At his Gospel's conclusion, the eleven disciples who have been taught by Jesus are authorized by him to share his teachings (Matt 28:16–20). Jesus' teaching is handed over to the community of the apostles without one apostle given precedence over the others. Compare this to John's Gospel, where Peter, John, and Thomas are singled out, or Luke's, where the two Emmaus disciples—and not the Eleven—are the first to see the risen Jesus and be instructed in how the Scriptures are fulfilled in him. In Mark's Gospel, as mentioned earlier, Peter is singled out: "But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you" (Mark 16:7).

Matthew's concept of shared apostolic authority pervades the entire last chapter, beginning with the angel and then the resurrected Jesus both telling the women to tell the disciples to go to Galilee. By calling his brothers, Jesus commits to them his own task of preaching. Shared apostolic authority even emerges negatively in the account of the high priests thinking that all the disciples were capable of stealing the body of the Jesus and concocting an account of his resurrection that could serve as a pseudo-Gospel (Matt 28:13). The eleven disciples follow the instructions given to the women first by the angel and then by Jesus that the eleven are to go to Galilee (Matt 28:12), where they, like Jesus, would begin their ministry (Matt 4:12). Recognizing the resurrected Jesus and then worshiping him indicates that the Galilee event was a formal commissioning more sacred than any ordination.

Within the context of Matthew's Gospel, the commission to preach the words they had heard from Jesus and for which they would experience martyrdom also required that these words be written down. "Therefore I send [ἀποστέλλω] you prophets and wise men and scribes [γραμματεῖς], some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town" (Matt 23:34). Any document, even one representing a community, has only one writer to put ink to paper. Unlike Luke and John who put themselves front and center as Gospel writers, Matthew hid himself in his account as the anonymous scribe who has become a disciple of Jesus. "Therefore every scribe who has been made a disciple [πᾶς γραμματεὺς μαθητευθεὶς] for the kingdom of heavens is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Matt 13:52).[14] In composing his account of Jesus, Matthew married the Old Testament with the new things that Jesus did. In Jesus, God and Moses have become one, and Matthew assumed the task of putting into writing how the old revelation came to its final and intended form in Jesus, who is not only its author but also its content. Moses appears in each Gospel as the most significant person through whom God has given revelation of himself, but in Matthew, Jesus appears as the greater Moses by being persecuted at birth by an evil ruler. The Sermon on the Mount resembles God's covenant with Israel made at Sinai through Moses, and his final commission to the Eleven has strong echoes of Moses sending the tribes into the promised land (Deut 33:2–29).

[14] The word μαθητευθεὶς ("being trained for the kingdom of heavens") has one of the twelve disciples as its best possible referent, and the "new and old" that comes from the treasure refers to what God had done in the past with Israel and what he is doing now in Jesus.

Should Matthew have been the first evangelist, as we believe he was, he had to find a place for the Old Testament, but he also had to show that it had been absorbed into the person of Jesus who, as the author, content, and fulfillment of the Torah, had the last word on what it meant. No longer could Torah stand as the autonomous or final revelation of God. By taking the Old Testament into him, Jesus' teaching and hence Matthew's Gospel would take precedence over the law and the prophets. Jesus' commission to the disciples to teach others the things that he had taught them makes no mention of the prophets (Matt 28:19), whose words must now be understood in a totally christological sense. Jesus' words would be determinative for the faith of the community, and accepting or rejecting them would determine the fate or judgment of those who heard them. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, a judgment reminiscent of the Noahic flood comes on those who disregard what he says (Matt 7:21–27). Furthermore, those who reject those entrusted with the message of Jesus, as was Matthew, face the fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt 10:14–15). In the final discourse (Matt 25:31–46), Jesus metes out both rewards and punishments.

Matthew as the Conclusion of the Old Testament

Since the individual books of the Old Testament as a collection of the canon have no satisfactory conclusion, they leave their readers unsatisfied. It does not even reach a plateau of realized eschatology. Nothing is realized at the end in Malachi, and the reader is left with a promise and nothing more (Mal 4:5–6). This is just as true of Deuteronomy as it is of Joshua or any Old Testament book. In itself the Old Testament is a perpetual Advent with no Christmas. Matthew took on the task of providing Jesus, rectifying the situation by providing its conclusion. His Gospel is the new Torah into which the old Torah is totally absorbed and to which the community of believers will look to find Jesus. Of all the evangelists, Matthew's task was the most daunting. He was caught between a Scylla and a Charybdis. On the one hand, he could have merely held up Jesus as equal to the other prophets (the Ebionite view), or, on the other hand, he could have disconnected Jesus from the God who chose Israel as his people (Marcion's view). The Ebionite view would have meant that Matthew was writing a book that was not really that different than any other Old Testament book. The Marcionite option would have left the Old Testament as a useless set of Jewish documents. Matthew's great, singular, and unmatched accomplishment is that he drew the entire Old Testament into his Gospel so that on one hand it is forever affirmed as the word of God, but its character is now forever fundamentally changed. Present in the words of Matthew's Gospel is Jesus of Nazareth.[15] This is a flesh and blood appearance.

III. Conclusion

Going behind a writer's words to determine his thoughts is precarious, but this is what the study of literature is all about—and the Bible is certainly literature. Asking about an author's intentions does have value, and good reasons exist to propose that Matthew thought he was writing the longed-for and much-needed conclusion to the Old Testament. Matthew leaves no hint that other books about Jesus had been written, and his conclusion assumes that no other books would be written—but of course he was proved to have been mistaken. Some people are consciously aware that they are starting something completely new, like the signers of the Declaration of Independence, for example. Arguably Moses was (Exodus 3–4), but what about the awareness of those who are bringing things to an end? Warnings about adding or subtracting from the Book of Revelation indicate that revelation had come to an end (Rev 22:19–20). In providing a more than adequate record of what Jesus had taught, Matthew may have had a similar thought in mind. His Gospel brought the Old Testament to a conclusion. The "all things whatsoever" that the disciples are to teach is hardly hyperbole (Matt 28:20). Matthew's list of Jesus' ancestors is more a recapitulation of God's dealing with Israel than simply a genealogy. In offering his own genealogy, Luke may have failed to recognize what Matthew was doing. Matthew intended to write the final chapter to the Old Testament that was in dire need of a conclusion.

Now comes the question that if Matthew had thought that his Gospel was the conclusion to the Old Testament, that is, everything that the people had to know about Jesus, how, when, and why did the rest of the New Testament come into existence? In writing his Gospel, Luke opened the door to a New Testament canon, and his record of the Lord's Supper has given us the phrase "New Testament" (Luke 22:20) that came to be applied to all the apostolic writings.

One writer is critical of another's writing, one pastor is critical of another's preaching, and so it was with the evangelists. Each wanted to say something in another way. Matthew's catechetical style did not strictly

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[15] In his account of Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth claiming that he has fulfilled Isaiah, which is then repeated twice in the Easter narrative, Luke affirms this understanding that the entire Old Testament is absorbed into Jesus (Luke 4:16–21). Matthew does the actual exegetical work of showing how this fulfillment is accomplished.

comport with *wie es eigentlich geschehen ist*, or so Luke thought, and he was right. The cards had to be reshuffled. Unless this was done, Theophilus would not have had the historical certainty on which faith is based. With Peter's firsthand knowledge and his own literary and theological acumen, Mark expanded on Matthew and Luke, and so he reshuffled the cards again. That is what preaching is all about—reshuffling the cards.

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Luke's Canonical Criterion

Arthur A. Just Jr.

Before addressing how Luke-Acts presents itself as "canonical" Scripture, it may be helpful to give a historical sketch of the origin of Luke's Gospel and the Book of Acts that followed. As Luke the evangelist reported in Acts 19, "Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome'" (Acts 19:21). So it was that during Paul's third missionary journey he intended to travel to Jerusalem and Rome, and perhaps beyond that to Spain, the final destinations of his apostolic activity before returning to Rome for his martyrdom in AD 65.

I. Luke and Paul in Philippi

Paul's third missionary journey, as it turned out, was not without controversy, particularly in Ephesus, where, as Luke understated in Acts 19, "there arose no little stir concerning the Way" (Acts 19:23), resulting in a "considerable company of people" becoming enraged and crying out: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians," thereby filling the city with confusion. The uproar was such that it resulted in Paul's departure for Macedonia, then to Greece, where he stayed for three months. His intent was to sail from Greece to Syria, and then to Jerusalem, perhaps for the Passover. But some sort of plot against him by the Jews caused him to reconsider. Instead he headed back to Macedonia,[1] which was serendipitous, since he would not have otherwise encountered Luke in Philippi where he celebrated the Pascha with him and the Philippian saints. Sailing away from Philippi with Luke, Paul was finally on his way to Jerusalem in time to celebrate the feast of Pentecost.

[1] See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles,* Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 665, where he notes that "Ramsey suggests that Paul wanted to take a ship on which Jewish pilgrims going to Jerusalem for Passover would have been his fellow travelers, and some of them planned to do him in," citing William M. Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen*, 11th ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), 287.

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Luke carefully constructed Paul's journey to Jerusalem in order to mirror Jesus' Jerusalem journey in the Gospel (Luke 9:51—19:28).[2] Perhaps Luke's care in describing Paul's journey to Jerusalem was because he had been an eyewitness, this being the second of three "we" sections in Acts (16:10–17; 20:5—21:18; 27:1—28:16). But there may be more to this account than a simple attribution to Luke being an eyewitness, for not only did he describe the places where Paul journeyed—Macedonia, Greece, Philippi, Troas, Assos, Mytilene, Chios, Samos, and Miletus (Acts 20:1–16)—but also the delegation that accompanied him along the way: Sopater from Beroea (the son of Pyrrhus), Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and the Asians Tychichus and Trophimus (Acts 20:4). He also carefully placed these events within the Jewish-Christian calendar of Pascha and Pentecost. We must conclude that Paul's journey to Jerusalem and beyond, to Caesarea Maritima and Rome, is of special significance to Luke. Had Jesus not turned his face to go to Jerusalem, there would have been no atonement. So also with Paul; had he not turned his face to go to the same Holy City, there would have been no Gospel of Luke or Book of Acts, and perhaps no Markan Gospel. Paul may have later given up his life in Rome during the Neronian persecution, but he needed to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost, and even more importantly, in Caesarea for consultations with Luke and Mark for the writing of their Gospels.

II. Luke, Mark, and Paul in Caesarea Maritima

So goes the theory of Bo Reicke in *The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels* that is based on Philemon 23–24, "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers" (note that Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke were with Paul in Troas as he made his way to Jerusalem). Reicke argues persuasively that Paul penned Philemon during the two years of his captivity in Caesarea Maritima, AD 58–60, since he writes in Philemon 9, "I, Paul, an ambass-

[2] Luke T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles,* Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 5 (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 357: "More significant by far than any other single stage of the journey is the way in which Luke has so obviously structured it [Paul's journey to Jerusalem] to mirror the great journey of the prophet Jesus to his death and triumph in Jerusalem (Luke 9:51—19:44). Paul announces his intention, sends out delegates ahead of him, and then proceeds to move steadily toward a destiny that is ever more clearly enunciated as he approaches the city of Jerusalem. Luke shows through this journey not only that Paul shared the prophetic spirit of Jesus that was demonstrated through the proclamation of the word in boldness, and in the doing of signs and wonders, but also and above all that he replicated the pattern of the prophet who was rejected in Jerusalem."

ador and *now* a prisoner also for Christ Jesus." During his captivity Luke and Mark were with Paul, consulting with him in the writing of their Gospels. This helps to explain the close parallels between the two, especially the sequence of pericopes. As Reicke notes, "the best explanation for the parallelism is the personal contacts between the evangelists in Caesarea which are indicated by the Pauline captivity epistles."[3]

So what seemed like an unfortunate inconvenience for Paul—not sailing directly to Palestine from Greece, and instead traveling through Greece to Macedonia and beyond that to Troas and Miletus—allowed Paul to reunite with Luke in Philippi, celebrate the Pascha there with him, then travel with Paul to Jerusalem and to Caesarea, from where he wrote his Gospel.

Not many have questioned what Luke may have been up to between the first "we" section of Acts during Paul's second missionary journey, when Paul received the Macedonian call in AD 51 to come to Europe to preach the gospel, and this serendipitous reunion with Paul at the end of his third missionary journey, as he made his way to Jerusalem in AD 58.

What exactly was Luke doing for those seven years, and was it simply a coincidence that Paul left him in Philippi in AD 51 and then reunited with him in Philippi seven years later? Could it be that Luke was the pastor of Philippi for those seven years? Could Luke have been the "bishop" of Macedonia, overseeing the distribution to the house churches of the few New Testament documents available at that time, especially the Gospel of Matthew, as well as overseeing their eucharistic life? Could Luke's pastoring of Philippi have been the reason why this congregation was the one most beloved by Paul, the most faithful of all the churches he founded, and the most generous? Could Paul's letter to the Philippians have been the last letter he wrote, from Rome while under house arrest, as recorded at the end of Acts—a love letter to them for their fidelity and liberality, as well as his farewell before his unexpected release and subsequent mission to Spain, which was followed by his return to Rome for martyrdom in AD 65?

Remarkably, few commentators wonder what Luke had been up to for those seven years. Typical of such lack of curiosity is Colin Hemer in his monumental book *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, who notes that Luke "first appears at Acts 16:10 at Troas, *is lost to view at*

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[3] Bo Reicke, *The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 165–166, 168. W. Arndt, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 24. Arndt also suggests a Caesarean provenance for Luke's Gospel.

Philippi, and reappears there at 20:5."[4] But Philip Carrington, a reliable and infinitely readable historian of the first century, assumes that Luke was the pastor when he asks, after Paul and Luke celebrated the Pascha in Philippi, "Who was put in charge of the church at Philippi when Luke left it?"[5] C.K. Barrett, a Durham theologian, asks in the introduction to his second volume of his commentary on Acts, "Did he [Luke], when Paul moved on, remain in Philippi? . . . Had the 'first person' been in Philippi all this time?"[6] But it is Bo Reicke, in his book *Re-examining Paul's Letters: The History of the Pauline Correspondence*, who is the most explicit about Luke's role in Philippi as he comments on the careful details of the beginning of Paul's journey to Rome:

> By using the we-form, the author apparently wanted to show that he also experienced the events in Macedonia and was explicitly included in the work of spreading the gospel. Moreover, it is striking that the very next we-passage is Paul's and his companions' final departure from Philippi, and that both occurrences, though separated by considerable distance in time and events, are recorded with such meticulous detail (Acts 16:10–17; Acts 20:5–6 ["God had called us to preach the gospel. . . ." "But we set sail after the days of unleavened bread," 16:10 and 20:6]). The precise descriptions in these two passages as well as their association with Philippi imply that the author was active in Macedonia, at least in part, during the time that Paul worked in Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus. Thus this coincidence between the first and second we-passages might well be because of the author's special association with Philippi and the Pauline Macedonian mission. . . . *The "we" suggests that Luke was active as a preacher in Philippi and Macedonia*, although he wanted to remain anonymous in the company of Paul, Timothy, and Silas.[7]

In summary, the following chart on the "we" sections of Acts suggests that Luke pastored Philippi and other congregations in Macedonia for seven years:

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[4] Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 362 (emphasis added).

[5] Philip Carrington, *The Early Christian Church*, vol. 1, *The First Christian Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 152.

[6] C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), xxvi.

[7] Bo Reicke, *Re-examining Paul's Letters: The History of the Pauline Correspondence* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 92 (emphasis added).

"We" Sections in Acts	Proposed Date	Paul's Activity	Luke's Activity
16:10–17 Second Missionary Journey	AD 51	Macedonian Vision Travels through Asia Minor to Philippi.	Travels with Paul to Philippi. (Possibly becomes a pastor for the Philippian church after Paul leaves.)
20:5—21:18 Third Missionary Journey	AD 58	Arrives at Philippi from Macedonia with others. Remains there for the Pascha. Leaves for Troas after it, then to Jerusalem.	Celebrates Pascha in Philippi and goes with Paul to Jerusalem.
27:1—28:16 Journey to Rome	AD 60–61	The Storm at Sea and Shipwreck Safe Harbor in Malta Arrives in Rome, under home arrest	Travels to Rome with Paul.

III. Theophilus

There is yet one more thing to consider about Luke and Paul in Philippi. Could Theophilus have been a catechumen from the church in Philippi, a wealthy man who offered to serve as a literary patron for Luke's Gospel during that celebration of the Pascha of AD 58, and the "most excellent Theophilus" to whom Luke dedicated both the Gospel and Acts?

Could this Theophilus have been like many Gentiles who had been yearning for a Gospel to be written for them? Assuming Matthean priority, could Theophilus, a Gentile, have been listening to Luke preach on Matthew for seven years, and was now willing to fund a Gospel in his own "language," so to speak, a Gospel for him, a Gentile, a Roman citizen, in order to hear the Jesus story from a Hellenistic point of view? Matthew's Gospel was reliable and certain, but Theophilus desired a Gospel for people like him, one that was Pauline, written after Paul's three missionary journeys for the churches that he had founded among the Gentiles in both Asia Minor and Europe.

The danger of a "new" Gospel is that it would have been measured against the "certainty" of Matthew's Gospel, with all its Jewish and Jerusalem gravitas. Could Luke measure up? Could Theophilus and the Gentiles in Philippi be "certain" that Luke's Gospel could serve as catechesis for Gentiles, just as Matthew's Gospel had served as catechesis for Jews? Would the church in Jerusalem approve?[8] Could the Jesus story actually be told from another point of view—a Hellenistic one—and could it have a Pauline perspective?

What Theophilus may have wondered as he read Luke's "Gospel" was whether it was "canonical" just as Matthew's Gospel was "canonical," in the sense of authoritative Scripture in line with the authority of the Scriptures of Israel (i.e., what we know as the Old Testament). Could the purpose of Luke's prologue to his Gospel, addressed to "most excellent Theophilus," have been to affirm that his Gospel was as reliable as Matthew's, and that the oral and written traditions that Luke used to compile his Gospel were as faithful and true to the Gospel story as Matthew's? Could the prologue's final word, *ἀσφάλεια* ("certainty," "reliability," "truth"), be a criterion for canonicity? That in fact is how Luke ended his prologue, a periodic sentence ending with this purpose clause: *ἵνα ἐπιγνῷς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν* ("in order that you come to recognize completely the certainty of the story through which you have been catechized," Luke 1:4).

IV. *Ἀσφάλεια* in the Lukan Prologue

Whether or not Theophilus was a catechumen from the Philippian congregation is not crucial to a consideration of *ἀσφάλεια* as a criterion for canonicity. What Theophilus was *not* is some archetypal "lover of God,"[9] even though such a designation was made by Origen, and later by Ambrose, who used Origen's commentary on Luke for his own commentary.[10]

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[8] Perhaps this is the reason why Cleopas was named as one of the Emmaus disciples. Tradition affirms that Cleopas is Joseph's brother and Jesus' uncle. The other unnamed disciple was Simeon, Cleopas' son, the second bishop of Jerusalem. Simeon would have been presiding over Jerusalem when Luke's Gospel began circulating in the churches. As the Gospel of Paul, Luke's Gospel may not have been as well received in Jerusalem as it was in other places. But what better way to receive approbation than to have the bishop of Jerusalem give his episcopal imprimatur as one of the Emmaus disciples, a level of "certainty" that would not go unnoticed by the Jerusalem church.

[9] On some levels, we are all like Theophilus, "lovers of God."

[10] Origen writes, "Someone might think that Luke addressed the Gospel to a specific man named Theophilus. But, if you are the sort of people God can love, then all of you who hear us speaking are 'Theophiluses,' and the Gospel is addressed to you.

Theophilus was a real person in the first century, a literary patron and a God-fearer, who had been catechized by Jewish materials (Matthew) but then encouraged Luke to write a Gospel for the catechesis of the Gentiles, which would have been carried out by Jewish Christians. Living in the historical context of the first century, he was a Gentile seeking certainty (ἀσφάλεια) in a Gentile way from Luke and Paul. Speculation about the identity of Theophilus makes for fascinating reading, but it is probably impossible to determine who he was, although he appears to have been a catechumen, since the word κατηχήθης is used in the prologue,[11] perhaps even from Philippi?[12]

Anyone who is a Theophilus is both 'excellent' and 'very strong.' This is what the Greek word Θεοφιλος [Theophilos] actually means," quoted in *Luke*, ed. Arthur A. Just Jr., Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 4. Or Ambrose, "So the Gospel was written to Theophilus, that is, to him whom God loves. If you love God, it was written to you. If it was written to you . . . ," quoted in *Luke*, ed. Arthur A. Just Jr., 3:4.

[11] The verb κατηχέω ("to catechize, instruct, inform") occurs four times in Luke-Acts (Luke 1:4; Acts 18:25; 21:21, 24) and three times in Paul (Rom 2:18; 1 Cor 14:19; Gal 6:6). Acts 18:25 has the same meaning as here: Apollos "had been catechized [ἦν κατηχημένος] in the way of the Lord." Other key Lukan themes stand out in Acts 18:25: "the way" (τὴν ὁδόν) relates to the journey motif and is a catechetical designation of the Christian faith (see comments on Luke 1:76, 79). As a result of his catechesis, Apollos taught about Jesus ἀκριβῶς, "accurately, carefully" (Acts 18:25), even as Luke investigated his sources ἀκριβῶς, "carefully, accurately" (Luke 1:4). Paul says that in the Christian assembly, he prefers rational words, not speaking in tongues, so that he may "catechize" (κατηχήσω) those present (1 Cor 14:19). In Gal 6:6, Paul uses the verb twice: he refers to one who is "catechized" (κατηχούμενος) regarding "the Word" (λόγος, as in Luke 1:2) by a "catechist" (κατηχοῦντι), and the verse implies that such a teacher-student relationship was common among the Christian churches to whom he writes. Cf. Herman Beyer: "Gal. 6:6 points out that those who are taught should support those who teach. It may be that Paul chose this rare word (rather than διδάσκειν) so as to stress the distinctive nature of Christian instruction (cf. our present use of the word catechism)." Herman W. Beyer, "*katēchéō,*" *The Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume,* ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 422. Paul also uses κατηχέω in the sense of Jewish catechesis in Rom 2:18, concerning a Jew's instruction in Torah, and this catechesis would also enable him to be a "leader . . . instructor . . . teacher" (Rom 2:19–20), as was the Christian Apollos. Jewish catechetical schools led by rabbis were well developed institutions by the New Testament era; the schools of Rabbis Hillel and Shammai, often cited in the Talmud, flourished ca. 30 BC to AD 10 and reportedly had students numbering in the thousands.

[12] Mark Birkholz suggests the following "real people": 1. Theophilus, the brother-in-law of Caiaphas, high priest from AD 37–41; 2. Theophilus, a government official from Athens; 3. Theophilus, a wealthy Christian from Antioch; 4. Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7–12); 5. Lucius Junius Annaeus Gallio (Acts 18:12–17); 6. Titus Flavius Clemens, son of the Emperor Domitian, whose wife was a Christian; 7. Philo; 8. Herod Agrippa II.

But Theophilus and Gentiles like him were not the only ones searching for certainty in the words through which they had been catechized. Jeffrey Kloha, in the final paragraph of his article "Theological Hermeneutics after Meaning," states:

> For what we crave is certainty, a clear word that solves all problems, definitively, so that we can put this behind us, and get on to whatever we think "really matters." . . . We live "after meaning," that is, after meaning himself came into the flesh, died, and rose. In his work is certainty, for salvation; our lives, filled with uncertainty, are lived by faith, hearing ever again the voice of the Shepherd and following where he leads.[13]

The need for certainty is a recurrent theme among our students and among our parishioners, and it is one that is worthy of our attention. Kloha's article refers to the incarnation and the work of Christ as the source of our certainty. Unfortunately, because Kloha's statement comes at the conclusion of his essay, we do not see how he might develop this. What he does do is put the issue of "certainty" before us. And as a survey of the literature demonstrates, the problem with "certainty" is the uncertainty of what *ἀσφάλεια* means.

By concluding his prologue, a periodic sentence with a purpose clause that ends with the word "certainty," *τὴν ἀσφάλειαν*, in the emphatic position, Luke is telling Theophilus and us that "certainty" matters. *Ἀσφάλεια* may be translated as truth, reliability, assurance, guarantee, firmness, or confidence. Certainty of faith is the goal of Luke's Gospel, which comes from accurate, systematic instruction in the events and in the narrative that Luke is about to tell. Certainty is in the story of Jesus, or as Kloha puts it, "In his work is certainty, for salvation,"[14] and his work for salvation is told in the Gospel of Luke: a work of preaching and teaching, a work of miracles, and a work of passion, resurrection, and ascension.

By concluding his prologue with *ἀσφάλεια*, Luke tells us that *faith's* certainty is why he wrote his Gospel, and that his narrative is to be understood as a kerygmatic one, which is what *κατηχήθης* implies in this context, that is, testimony regarding historical facts and the *proclamation* of their doctrinal significance that creates faith's certainty.

Mark Birkholz, "Certainty in Luke-Acts: Fulfillment, Transmission, and Order" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2013), 52–53.

[13] Jeffrey Kloha, "Theological Hermeneutics after Meaning," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 46 (2012): 11.

[14] Kloha, "Theological Hermeneutics after Meaning," 11.

What "certainty" meant for Theophilus in AD 60 is what "certainty" means for us in AD 2015. "Certainty" is not dependent on our human context, even though Theophilus' human context was radically different from our modern/post-modern context. We may "hear" differently, but "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). The goal of our exegesis of Luke's Gospel is to hear faith's certainty as Theophilus heard it. But how do we do that? And what was this certainty that Theophilus sought? Historical/factual certainty? Theological certainty?[15] Eucharistic certainty?

V. What Was the "Certainty" That Theophilus Was Seeking?

H. J. Cadbury suggested in 1921 that ἀσφάλεια is apologetic, that is, "to defend Christians against unfavorable reports which had come to the ears of Theophilus."[16] Although most agree that there is an apologetic character to some of Luke's material, as there is with Matthew and Mark (e.g., Matthew's *apologia* for the sealing of the tomb with a court order), most see a more ecclesial purpose for all the Gospels.

Darrell Bock seems to agree, stating forthrightly that ἀσφάλεια is "not of a political nature" nor is Luke "writing an apology to a Roman official." He suggests that "assurance [ἀσφάλεια] is of a religious, theological nature." But then he seems to accent the historical and apologetical sense of Luke's intentions:

> Theophilus's question would seem to be, "Is Christianity what I believed it to be, a religion sent from God?" Perhaps such a doubt resulted from the judgment the church suffered, especially as a result of including Gentiles. Why should a Gentile suffer frustration for joining what was originally a Jewish movement? Is the church suffering God's judgment because it has been too generous with God's salvation? Will the rest of God's promises come to pass? Has most of Israel rejected the promise? . . . Can one really be sure Jesus is the fulfillment

[15] See Birkholz's conclusions after his analysis of Luke's prologue, where he affirms certainty in events and theology: "To summarize, the intended purpose of Luke's writing is to help a certain Theophilus (and presumably others) who have already been instructed, become more sure not only that the events about which they have been taught have actually taken place, but also that they have been correctly taught concerning their significance." Birkholz, "Certainty in Luke-Acts," 59.

[16] See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 289, who cites H. J. Cadbury, "The Purpose Expressed in Luke's Preface," *Expositor* 8/21 (1921): 432. Some have even surmised that this resulted from Theophilus's status as a prominent Roman official.

> of God's promise and that he brings God's salvation both now and in the future? By the emphasis on fulfillment in Jesus and *the truthful character of the tradition* (1:1), Luke intends to answer these questions with a resounding "yes." The gospel of Jesus is from God and is available for all, Jew and Gentile alike.[17]

Here is the question: Did Luke need to give assurance to Theophilus because of the troubles that Christianity caused in many of the places where it was planted? Quite possibly. There are numerous moments in Acts where Luke notes the turmoil that Christianity caused, for example, just before Paul and Luke's reunion in Philippi, there is the incident in Ephesus with Demetrius the silversmith, and Luke notes that "about that time there was no little stir concerning the Way" (Acts 19:23).[18] But again the question: was Theophilus concerned with the legitimacy of Christianity as the fulfillment of God's promise, especially in light of the Jewish rejection of Christianity, and did that involve "the truthful character of the tradition?"

Is Luke's purpose, therefore, to be accurate (ἀκριβῶς), as he suggests when he says, "it seems good to me also, after investigating from the beginning every tradition carefully" (παρηκολουθηκότι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς)? Is his goal the "truthfulness" about the events, the facts, as Robert Stein suggests:

> One major purpose of Luke was to assure his readers of *the truthfulness* of that which they had been taught about Jesus' life and teachings. . . . Since Luke also expected his account would agree with what his readers had been taught, he anticipated that as they read his "orderly account" (1:4) they would come to *a greater assurance of the truthfulness of this material.*[19]

The purpose of Luke's prologue depends how one understands ἀσφάλεια. Does it mean "truth," "reliability," "assurance," "certainty," or all of the above? To translate it as "reliability," as in my own commentary from 1996, implied "'reliability' in the sense of faith's certainty and assurance, which is the goal of the gospel and the goal of catechesis."[20] Ἀσφάλεια does mean reliability in the truth of fact-telling, but it implies more than

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[17] Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1—9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 65 (emphasis added).

[18] Compare Luke's expression in Acts 15:2 to describe the debate in Antioch over circumcision, which may have included Barnabas as "no small dissension and debate."

[19] Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 36 (emphasis added).

[20] Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1—9:50*, Concordia Commentary Series (St. Louis: Concordia, 1996), 36.

that, including a sense of "certainty" in both the theological significance of the narrative and its "certainty" as a sacred text for preaching.[21] Certainty, as I would now translate ἀσφάλεια, is "the certainty of faith."[22] This is the certainty that Luke's Gospel is canonical, that is, it is both reliable in its truth-telling of the facts, but even more, it serves the same "purpose" as Matthew's Gospel, namely, it is reliable and certain for preaching. Does Theophilus have certainty that Luke's narrative (διήγησιν) can be used for preaching in the context of the eucharistic liturgy?

As Theophilus listened to each part of the Gospel narrative, he also knew the end of the story. He knew the facts about Jesus, his teaching, his rejection, and his vindication. He knew them from Matthew's Gospel, and in hearing the facts of the gospel from Luke, would he be certain that they are true and worthy of preaching as a prelude to his reception of the Eucharist? But Theophilus would also have heard the theological significance of these events as they were interpreted by the evangelist Luke, a catechist who knew their meaning for salvation history and who had been preaching towards the Eucharist for seven years in Philippi.[23] So the

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[21] Richard Dillon seems to sum up the consensus: "Let us bear in mind that the καθεξῆς [orderly] of the main clause is what contributes directly to the realization of the author's purpose in writing, which is a 'certainty' (ασφάλεια) for his cultivated patron concerning 'the words' he had been taught (κατηχήθης). The 'orderly' writing is thus related to the reader's reassurance as action to purpose, hence the way we have conceived the Lucan 'ordering' will have much to do with the way we understand the 'certainty' being aimed at. Given our analysis of the 'order,' we can foresee that the reader's 'certainty' will be about the significance of the reported events as God's action in history, rather than about the mere factual truth of what is narrated." Richard J. Dillon, "Previewing Luke's Project," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981): 224.

[22] Karl Ludwig Schmidt writes, "All four words are current in earlier and later Greek in the sense of 'firmness,' 'certainty,' 'firm,' 'certain,' 'to make firm,' or 'certain.' They are used with the same meaning in the LXX and NT. The meaning, then, of λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν is 'the reliability of the words or teachings' (Luke 1:4). This corresponds to Acts 25:26: ἀσφαλές τι γράψαι, and again Acts 21:34; 22:30: γνῶναι τὸ ἀσφαλές, 'to know the truth.' The reference in Acts 2:36: ἀσφαλῶς γινωσκέτω πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραήλ is to 'certain, solid, or reliable knowledge.'" In a footnote, Schmidt notes that "Meyer's rendering of ἀσφάλεια as 'full certainty of faith' in *Ursprung*, I, 10 (Lk. 1:4) is perhaps a little exaggerated, but gives the right impression." Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "ἀσφάλεια, ἀσφαλής, ἀσφαλῶς, ἀσφαλίζω," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromily (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 1:506.

[23] John Wilkinson records Egeria's description of the sophisticated catechesis of Cyril of Jerusalem in the fourth century: "His subject is God's Law; during the forty days he goes through the whole Bible, beginning with Genesis, and first relating the literal meaning of each passage, then interpreting its spiritual meaning. He also teaches them at this time all about the resurrection and the faith [a reference to the New

prologue instructs hearers of all times to seek to discover the theological significance of the events that are about to be narrated as they prepare to receive the body and blood of Christ.

VI. Ἀσφάλεια in the Context of Luke's Prologue, Luke's Gospel, and the Book of Acts

What may help us get to the heart of what ἀσφάλεια means is this question: is Luke's Gospel worthy of eucharistic preaching? This suggests that the meaning of ἀσφάλεια cannot be determined without considering it in the context of Luke's prologue, Luke's Gospel, the book of Acts, and in the ecclesial context in which Luke was writing.[24] *Certainty* is related to Luke's description of his Gospel as a "narrative" (διήγησις),[25] which places it into a literary category that was a familiar genre in the first century, subject to literary analysis—a story that needed to be handed down through catechesis and preaching. Certainty for Theophilus also concerned the words (λόγων) through which he had been catechized, thereby framing Luke's prologue with two different ways of speaking of the genre of his work: narrative (διήγησις) and words (λόγων). This is the source of all preaching and catechesis. It is about events (πραγμάτων) that are now handed down, "traditioned" (παρέδοσαν), through words (λόγων) by "eyewitnesses" who "became ministers of the word" (ὑπηρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ λόγου), that is, ministers of the Gospel narratives (these are the same people but on either side of the kergymatic events of crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and post-Pentecost Eucharists). This Gospel narrative is the *viva vox Jesu* embodied in the church's eucharistic liturgy.[26] For Luke, then, the Word is

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Testament!]. And this is called catechesis." J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Ariel, 1981), 144.

[24] This would entail an extended exegesis of all the critical words in the prologue, such as what Luke means by narrative (διήγησιν), tradition (παρέδοσαν), eyewitnesses and ministers of the word (οἱ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ λόγου), recognition (ἐπιγνῷς), words (λόγων), catechesis (κατηχήθης), to mention but a few, and how these are words echoed throughout the Gospel, especially at the end. Some of this analysis is done here, but for more extensive discussion, see various commentaries.

[25] Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX,* 173–174: "Luke's use of *diegesis* as the quasi-title of his work gives it not only a literary dimension, but alerts the reader to the historical implications of the story."

[26] Certainty cannot be divorced from the reality that Luke's Gospel is a book of the church, written for the church, to be used by the church in its proclamation of the Gospel to the unbaptized and the baptized. The community that receives Luke's Gospel is a catechetical and eucharistic body. His Gospel prepares the baptized for the Eucharist and catechizes the unbaptized.

living in the flesh of Jesus, who spoke to these eyewitnesses before he ascended and continues to speak through them as ministers of the word in the preaching of the word.

These ministers of the word are as much a part of the kerygma as the events that have come to fulfillment, and they became ministers of the word when, after the resurrection, Christ opened up the Scriptures to them and made the events of his life, death, and resurrection the core of the mission proclamation. As a kerygmatic narrative, Luke's Gospel is a theological presentation of the events of the life of Jesus of Nazareth that brings to "fulfillment" God's plan revealed in the great Hebrew literary work, the Old Testament. Theophilus listened to Luke's Gospel to hear how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament, and he would not be disappointed. This is especially true in the Lukan frame of Jesus' preaching, first in the synagogue of Nazareth where he cited the messianic program of Isaiah 61 and 58 and proclaimed, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:16–30), then at Emmaus where "beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he [the risen Christ] explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:13–35), and finally to the Eleven where he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, namely, "that it is necessary that all the things that have been written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44–49).

This demonstration by Jesus of how to frame the events of his life as fulfillment of the Old Testament is the source of all apostolic preaching (e.g., Peter's temple sermon in Acts 3 and Paul's homily before Agrippa in Acts 26). As Richard Dillon says, "[These] unmistakably declare the risen Lord himself to be the speaker of the mission kerygma."[27] If this is Luke's intent, then "certainty" cannot be separated from how the Gospel narrative is embodied in apostolic preaching, a certainty only Luke can give with a two-volume work of dominical teaching and apostolic preaching.[28] Again Dillon:

[27] Dillon goes on to say: "We are not surprised, therefore, that the continuation of v. 1 in the *καθὼς*-clause of v. 2 makes the tradition of the sacred *πραγμάτων* just as much part of the Gospel's subject matter as the great happenings themselves. The evangelical accounts are of the events as mediated by their witnesses, and the recruitment and instruction of witnesses are to be a prominent feature of the story that Luke tells." Dillon, "Previewing Luke's Project," 213–214.

[28] Again, Dillon: "Luke not only set the kerygma persuasively in its full historical background, as his predecessors had tried to do; he also demonstrated more fully than they how the *historia Jesu* had given birth to the church of the present, through the service of well-schooled followers whom the Easter Christ had made into 'witnesses,'

> Obviously, a story which fully told how Jesus' own words of instruction were committed to appointed witnesses (Luke 24:44–48) could effectively instill a catechumen's ἀσφάλεια λόγων. But a story which went on to document how those witnesses actually echoed the Master's speech in founding churches could instill it incomparably better. This is already an indication that the concept of Luke's two-volume opus might well be contained within the objective stated by the Gospel's prologue.[29]

Luke provides programmatic affirmation of this at the beginning of Acts and at the climax of Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:36, the only other significant parallel use of a derivative of ἀσφάλεια to Luke's use of this word in the prologue. Once more, Richard Dillon:

> The Pentecost sermon of Peter illustrates this point with specific reference to the word ἀσφάλεια. At the climax of these inaugural *logoi* of the mission, to which he called all Israel's attention (Acts 2:22), Peter invites a "secure" confession with the adverbial form of the same word: "Let all Israel know with certainty (ἀσφαλῶς) that God has made both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you have crucified!" (Acts 2:36). This secure acknowledgement is the expected conclusion to the whole sketch of the πραγμάτα of Jesus, beginning with his public ministrations (Acts 2:22) and including his death, resurrection, and exaltation. But these are proclaimed with citation of the scriptural prophecies which declare the divine plan into which they fall. The proclamation thus continues the Easter discourse of the risen Lord, who explained the meaning of this ministry from the prophetic Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 44–45). Peter's words were aimed at a "certainty" of God's action ("God has made . . ." etc.) which would lead, in turn, to the repentance and conversion called for in his peroration (Acts 2:37–38). The ἀσφάλεια he induces in his hearers is not the assurance that things really happened as they were told, but that the events as told fall into God's plan of salvation, hence are truly saving events to which each listener must respond.[30]

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just as he even now makes listeners into believers." Dillon, "Previewing Luke's Project," 227.

[29] Dillon, "Previewing Luke's Project," 224–225.

[30] Dillon, "Previewing Luke's Project," 225–226. This affirms what Kloha stated when he wrote: "In his work is certainty, for salvation; our lives, filled with uncertainty, are lived by faith, hearing ever again the voice of the Shepherd and following where he leads." Kloha, "Theological Hermeneutics after Meaning," 15.

VII. Certainty in Recognizing (ἐπιγνῷς) Jesus in the Breaking of the Bread

The project of *The Ongoing Feast: Table Fellowship and Eschatology at Emmaus*[31] was to demonstrate that teaching and healing, word and meal, and λόγων and πραγμάτων go together, and that these two "structures" form the foundation for apostolic liturgy that has been handed down to us today. What we have dealt with so far is the meaning and content of λόγων as διήγησιν, the Gospel narrative. Together they form the core of what becomes "the liturgy of the catechumens," and for this there is certainty, ἀσφάλεια.

In almost every analysis of Luke's prologue, every word is dissected and exegeted as to its theological significance, all, that is, except for one word: the verb of the final purpose clause, ἐπιγνῷς, "to recognize completely." The question the prologue begs is how *did* Theophilus come to recognize completely that the words through which he has been catechized are certain? That recognition is the recognition of faith's certainty. This recognition that Jesus is the crucified and risen Christ first happens for a human being *by sight and by faith* in the final chapter of Luke's Gospel where he uses the same word for recognition in describing what the Emmaus disciples experienced when their eyes were opened "in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24:31: αὐτῶν δὲ διηνοίχθησαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ἐπέγνωσαν αὐτόν). Remarkably, very few commentators note or comment on Luke's use of the same word in his prologue and in the climax of Luke's Gospel.

In this context, "recognize" (ἐπιγινώσκω) is one of Luke's many synonyms for faith and its certainty in the reliability of Christian catechesis. The Emmaus disciples may have known the historical facts about Jesus' passion and resurrection (Luke 24:18–24), but they did not understand the meaning of those facts (24:25). The goal of Jesus' catechesis—and of the Emmaus narrative—is for the hearer "to believe in all the things that the prophets spoke" (24:25). At the beginning of the story in 24:16, the disciples' eyes were kept by God (theological passive) from perceiving Jesus; at the end of the story, the veil was taken away. *Faith's certainty (ἀσφάλεια; 1:4) came only when Christ interpreted the passion and resurrection facts and revealed himself in the breaking of the bread.*

Although the meaning of πραγμάτων is clearly the events of Jesus' life, especially the "passion and resurrection facts" as they are described by Jesus in Luke 24, these "events" are also given to believers in "the breaking of the bread," in body broken and blood poured out. One of the ironies,

[31] Arthur A. Just Jr., *The Ongoing Feast: Table Fellowship and Eschatology at Emmaus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993).

and truths, of the Emmaus story is that Jesus' catechesis on the road to Emmaus created burning hearts, but his λόγοι on the way failed to open their eyes. It was only "in the breaking of the bread" that their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

So to return to Theophilus and the question of whether ἀσφάλεια is a criterion for canonicity—as Theophilus attended the first Eucharist in which Luke's Gospel was read and preached upon—would he have come to the table with a burning heart, knowing and believing that he had heard the living voice of Jesus in Luke's Gospel narrative, and that this has prepared him to recognize completely the risen Christ "in the breaking of the bread?"

In this Theophilus and all believers who follow him can be certain that word and miracle, word and meal, and word and event are the means for mission and the source of faith's certainty.[32]

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[32] See Grant R. Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 124. In full he says: "The word and the bread are the means to mission. Luke wants to show that the presence of the Lord in teaching and eucharistic fellowship empowers the church for participation in Jesus' mission to the lost (cf. Luke 19:10). Verse 32 [24:32] graphically illustrates this point; the disciples' hearts 'burned within' them when Jesus 'opened the Scriptures' in the recognition experience. Mission is the result of this recognition as the disciples rush back to Jerusalem to tell the Eleven about the Risen Christ. Verses 33–35 tell about that triumphant return 'to Jerusalem.' Verse 33 combines both temporal ('at that same hour') and geographical ('to Jerusalem') factors. The result of recognition is mission; both are linked with the resurrection and Jerusalem as the starting point for the church's outreach." Osbourne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 124–25. See also R. Dillon, *From Eye-Witnesses to Ministers of the Word: Tradition and Composition in Luke 24,* AnBib 82 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978): 107, 113, 153, 212, 216–17, and especially 227–296. Dillon chooses the *mission enterprise* as his "focal point for distilling and refining the message of St. Luke that chapter 24 conveys" (267). He also points to the "Lucan blending of christology and ecclesiology, drawing out the *missiological consequence* of the Master's path to glory through passion and death" (278). Dillon also comments: "As risen Lord, present in word and sacrament, he shows himself the *goal and meaning of all the scriptures,* and he imparts to his followers that ministry of the word which continues to unlock the secret otherwise hidden away in the sacred pages. *His voice* is what continues to be heard in that ministry of the word (thus [Dt 18:15, 18] can be invoked by his witnesses, Acts 3:22–23), for it is only *in personal encounter with him,* and from that perspective, that the whole mystery of God's plan of salvation is opened to the eye of faith.—That is, in the final analysis, the teaching of the Emmaus story" (155).

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The Role of the Book of Acts in the Recognition of the New Testament Canon

Peter J. Scaer

Jesus declared himself to be the only access to the Father, and from almost the very beginning, his apostles represented him in an official and public capacity. Christ's ministry, like that of John before him, was baptismal (Mark 1:8), but it was the Twelve who baptized on his behalf (John 4:1–2). Jesus multiplied the loaves, but the Twelve fed the crowds (Matt 14:13–21). The Twelve served as his under-shepherds, driving out demons, healing the people, and proclaiming the kingdom of the heavens in his name (Matt 10:1). The apostles were the gatekeepers, providing access to Jesus (John 12:20–21), while at other times they became barriers (Matt 19:13). People recognized the apostles as being members of Jesus' entourage (Matt 26:69). It was thus a natural progression that after Christ had ascended, early Christians devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). From this historical foundation we have the apostolic tradition, the apostolic teaching, and eventually the apostolic Scriptures. The New Testament writings were not dropped down from above on a golden tablet; they rest first in history and in the proclamation of people who orally proclaimed the gospel that they had heard from the mouth of Jesus himself. The Spirit that came down from heaven was the one who inhabited Christ, whose words lodged themselves first in the apostles' memories and then in their manuscripts (John 16:14). In this picture, the Spirit's work of inspiration has a decidedly horizontal trajectory.

I. Diversity from the Beginning

Yet only the naïve would think that there was ever one Christianity, sociologically defined, or even one set of teachings that reflected the basic beliefs of all those who called themselves Christians. From the very beginning, there were differences, and the lines were, at least to human eyes, blurry. This was true, remarkably, even during the earthly ministry of Jesus. From the Gospel of Mark, we learn that the apostles were not the only ones who proclaimed the kingdom and performed miracles. John, a

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"Son of Thunder," complained to Jesus: "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name. We tried to stop him, because he was not following us" (Mark 9:38). To this the Lord replied, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. He who is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:39–40). Or as Jesus said elsewhere, "The Spirit blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes" (John 3:8). Thus, we might conclude that the New Testament church could be defined by two sets of principles: first by the presence of Christ and the apostles, and second by the place where the gospel was proclaimed, in whatever strange or various manner.

While the church could be found with Christ and the apostles, the reality has always been a bit untidy. And even among those who believe, there have always been divisions, some doctrinal, yet others based upon more human factors, such as geography, history, and circumstance.

There were serious disputes that took time to resolve, as was the case with circumcision at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1–35). At other times, division was a matter of degree. For instance, Paul describes the church as a building in 1 Corinthians 3:10–15, recognizing that some building materials are better than others. Gold, silver, and precious stones are the best; wood may not be as good, but it is certainly better than hay or straw (1 Cor 3:12). Perhaps Apollos' own teaching was compromised by a little hay or straw. We know from Acts that at least for a while, his baptismal theology was somewhat lacking, even as the Corinthians' understanding of the eucharistic bread may have been half-baked, so to speak (Acts 18:24–28). Surely it was in memory of a painful experience that Paul advised Timothy not to be hasty in the laying on of hands (1 Tim 5:22).

But then, within the church there have always been great fissures and deep divides. Jesus spoke about tares among the wheat and wolves in sheep's clothing. Early on, such fringe figures as Simon the Magician and the sons of Sceva appeared (Acts 8:9–25; Acts 19:11–20). Paul warned against those who cause divisions (Rom 16:17), and he himself battled false teachers of various stripes throughout his ministry. For this reason Paul began every epistle with an authoritative claim to apostleship. But such claims hardly protected Paul's authority, which the "super-apostles" claimed to trump (2 Cor 11:5). And, in the end, Paul had only his preaching, which would be accepted by some and rejected by others.

In such a messy world, God's people have always asked whose word could be trusted, and by what criteria. The Bereans tested Paul from the

Scriptures (Acts 17:10–15), and later the Didache offered some more practical tips for distinguishing a false prophet from the genuine article (Didache 11.1–12). In either case, there does not seem to be a magic pill or a silver bullet.

If the communion lines were never perfectly drawn, and there were always divisions along with a good deal of confusion, what might we say about the canon of Scripture? What about the New Testament presented to us by Gideon's International at our hotel bedside?

II. Canon: A Personal Reflection

When I began to teach a class on "The Introduction to the New Testament" more frequently, I typically addressed the question of canon historically and developmentally. I first noted that the word "canon" has a place in the New Testament (Gal 6:16) and that it refers to a rule or norm, embodied in a list or catalog.[1] This was an opportunity to discuss the *norma fidei*, that is, the rule of faith, established by Christ and the apostles, against which early Christian teaching was judged and measured. That is to say, when Christ ascended into heaven, the apostles did not. They remained as a group of witnesses who could testify to the life and words of their rabbi and Lord.[2] The apostolic teaching likewise could be verified by the many eyewitnesses who had known both Jesus and the apostles.[3] The apostles were not only groomed as Christ's successors, but they were groomed so publicly. Both Christ and his apostles spoke openly, and, as Paul noted to Agrippa, Christianity did not rise up in a corner (Acts 26:26).

I proceeded to talk about the historical development of the canon, including the place of the Gospels, whose earliest manuscripts are ascribed to the authors, and the general acceptance of most of the Pauline letters.[4] Likewise, I noted the variations that have led to some books being labeled *homolegoumena* and *antilegomena*. As a Lutheran, such a distinction was

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[1] See Harry Gamble, *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 15–22.

[2] For a seminal discussion of Jesus as rabbi and the apostles as his students, see Bo Reicke, *The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

[3] For a wide-ranging discussion of the role that eyewitnesses played in the composition and testimony of the gospels, see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006).

[4] For a groundbreaking discussion on the early emergence the canonical Gospels, see Graham Stanton, "The Fourfold Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 43, no. 3 (1997): 317–346.

especially helpful in dealing with our namesake's disparagement of the Epistle of James. Still other books, for various reasons, have been categorized as *notha*—spurious—due either to their content or authorship or, from time to time, politics.[5]

Indeed, it is common to speak about the criteria for canonicity. First of all, for a book to be included in the New Testament, it had to be in some way apostolic, that is, written by an apostle, like Matthew and John, or someone associated with the apostles, such as Mark and Luke.[6] It was not enough to claim divine inspiration if that inspiration did not in some way come from the mouth of the incarnate Christ. At least, this is the way Irenaeus saw things (*Against Heresies* III, 11, 8). Of course, claims to apostolicity, while necessary, were not sufficient, as can be seen in the church's rejection of the *Gospel of Peter*. A second factor was that of usage. In his discussion of canon, for instance, Eusebius continually asks whether and for how long churches had made public use of a particular document.[7] And, of course, heresy played a role in spurring the church toward a clearer definition of canon. When Marcion published his own canon that included only one Gospel (an edited form of Luke), along with ten epistles of Paul, the church was called to respond. Likewise, Irenaeus was compelled to think through this issue especially in his battles against Gnosticism.[8] Irenaeus described the process of discernment in terms of a mosaic or a puzzle. The question with any teaching or writing was whether it fit within what the church knew to be true from the apostles' teaching.[9]

In his work *Canon Revisited*, Michael J. Kruger notes that the canonical books are recognized not only by their apostolic origin and ecclesiastical acceptance, but also by their very content.[10] The Scriptures, in such a view, breathe a kind of divine air. By saying that the Scriptures are "self-authen-

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[5] For a telling discussion of the political factors involved in the canon's history, see David L. Dungan, *Constantine's Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).

[6] For a discussion of apostolicity, see Gamble, *The New Testament Canon*, 68–69. For a fuller discussion from a theological point of view, see David P. Scaer, *The Apostolic Scriptures* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971).

[7] Richard P.C. Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 215–221.

[8] For a discussion of these matters, see John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 407–408.

[9] See, for instance, Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.9.4; 1.10.

[10] Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 125–157.

ticating," we are drawing upon the words of Jesus when he said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Now, admittedly, such reasoning is open to the criticism of being circular, but it has a certain appeal and effectiveness. For instance, if someone is curious as to why the *Gospel of Peter* or the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* did not make it into the canon, there is no reason to pretend that there is a scandal. For most, a simple reading of the document, or at least a guided reading, will suffice. Even without appeal to the Holy Spirit, one might simply ask the question, does a particular document fit within our knowledge of Jesus? And, on a more basic level, we might ask if the document has any basic literary quality.

Perhaps, just for fun, one could call this the "Sesame Street Criterion": place the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* alongside those of Matthew and John, and you, too, are bound to start singing, "One of these is not like the others. One of these just doesn't belong." And indeed, this has been the approach taken by many of our best scholars. Simon Gathercole, for instance, has done a great service to the church by intelligently exposing such inferior works as the *Gospel of Thomas*, which is, upon inspection, derivative and late.[11] The *Gospel of Peter*, which is no doubt interesting historically, appears to portray a Jesus who, rather than dying, is simply taken up into heaven, an idea that invites Christians to respond, "Get thee behind me, *Gospel of Peter*." Or to put it another way, hidden gospels are usually hidden for a reason. And like Leah, they are much more appealing before the veil is lifted.

In fact, the very idea of a "hidden" gospel has recently been challenged and should probably be put to bed. Thanks to the work of Richard Bauckham, we can dispel the notion that any, or at least many, of the New Testament books were somehow esoteric or known only to a few communities. In his work *The Gospel for All Christians*, Richard Bauckham demonstrates that the early church was a closely knit and widely networked community. Not only the apostles but also Christians like Priscilla and Aquilla traveled extensively, bringing with them not only the apostles' greetings, but their own writings as well. New Testament Gospels and epistles were early and widely distributed everywhere throughout the

[11] See Simon Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction and Commentary*, (Boston: Brill, 2014), and especially Simon Gathercole, *The Composition of the Gospel of Thomas: Original Language and Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Roman empire, with its excellent transportation over the Mediterranean Sea and upon the famed Roman roads.[12]

Yet the issue of canon never seemed all that pressing. Eusebius reported in his *Church History* that the basic contours of the New Testament canon were pretty well agreed on by all, and that included the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of Paul, 1 John, 1 Peter, and perhaps Revelation. The epistles of James, Jude, 2 Peter, and the latter two of John, though labeled *antilegomena* ("disputed"), were nonetheless approved by many. It has been my thought all along that the disputed books were no less scripture than the others, but that a matter of full consensus was simply hard to come by. The idea of continuing to categorize some of the scriptural books as *antilegomena* is fine, historically speaking. And, we might add, if we are speaking about the church historically, the *homolegoumena-antilegomena* distinction continues, with some saying that documents like the pastoral epistles are not apostolic. But if that means prioritizing Paul over Peter, John, or James, then it can appear as if Lutherans are stacking the deck—declaring trump after the cards have already been dealt. I can understand the tendency of many to set aside Revelation as "disputed," but that move is nonetheless regrettable.[13] And though we may sympathize with Luther's struggles with James, I doubt whether any among us think that he was correct. The fact that it all fell into place as it did, without great fissure, is miracle enough for me. And yet, if this or that book is challenged, that seems less of a threat than an opportunity to read more thoroughly. Second Peter, for instance, is widely disparaged, but its brilliance has been shown in commentaries by Richard Bauckham and Jerome Neyrey.[14] To put it another way, the documents, like Jesus himself, are always on trial, and every claim against them leads the church deeper into the study of them.

Perhaps I was too complacent or too naïve. For many of my fellow graduate students at Notre Dame, questions regarding canon were a much bigger issue. And they usually had less to do with finding a foundation of

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[12] Richard Bauckham, *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 50–53, 60–65.

[13] For a sparkling defense of Revelation's pedigree, see Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 273. The book's canonicity was affirmed by Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. Theological doubts, which arose in the East, especially in response to chiliastic teaching, thereafter tended to dissipate.

[14] See especially Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 50 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983) and Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, vol. 37C (New York: Doubleday, 1993).

faith than with stretching the limits of the acceptable. Those pushing to expand or obliterate the canonical boundaries were not merely theological romantics who had fallen in love with the *Shepherd of Hermas* or the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Instead, they were hoping against hope to include something like the *Gospel of Thomas*. Such a document could throw a monkey wrench into the whole enterprise and relativize the other documents, as well as what is now commonly called the "Great Tradition."[15] The *Gospel of Thomas* was especially appealing, as it consisted simply of words of wisdom, a kind of "Q Document" for the more deeply spiritual, who could then find a Christ of wisdom apart from such embarrassments as the virgin birth, the resurrection, the physicality of incarnation, or the blood of redemption.

III. Bart Ehrman: An Agnostic Augustine

Lately, questions of both text and canon have taken on a sensationalistic air, in no small part due to Bart Ehrman, who may well have become the "Court Theologian of Skepticism," and whose popular pope may well be Bill Maher. And, as every adult convert seems to have a conversion story, Bart Ehrman has his own deconversion story—his kind of anti-Confessions—on the road to agnosticism. At a 2009 Symposium in St. Louis, Jeffrey Kloha observed, "I am more and more convinced that all theology is biography."[16] If we take the example of Ehrman, we concede Kloha's point.

Bart Ehrman became a Christian as a teenager and proceeded to study at the Moody Bible Institute and then at Wheaton, finally earning a PhD at Princeton University under Bruce Metzger, the leading light of textual criticism. His early orientation was decidedly fundamentalist. Ehrman's first great stumbling block came when he read Luke's account of Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives in Luke 22 and discovered that verses 43–44, which describe the appearance of an angel and Jesus' sweat appearing as drops of blood, may not actually have been in the original manuscript. Ehrman writes, "For me, though, this [the loss of the original manuscripts of the New Testament] was a compelling problem. It was the words of scripture themselves that God had inspired. Surely we have to know what those words were if we want to know how he had communicated to us."[17]

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[15] I refer now to the welcomed ecumenical movement embodied in such projects as The Ancient Christian Commentary Series, as well as the magazine *Touchstone*.

[16] Jeffrey Kloha, "The Authority of the Scriptures," presented at the 2010 symposium at Concordia Seminary on "The Scriptures: Formative or Formality?"

[17] Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 4.

This led Ehrman to say, "The Bible began to appear to me as a very human book. . . . This was a human book from beginning to end."[18] This was, for Ehrman, the end of inerrancy and with it innocence and confidence.

Having written my dissertation on the passion account in the Gospel of Luke, I was well aware of Ehrman's work in textual criticism. The kinds of differences that he supposedly found shocking I found delightful. For what it is worth, I think the story of the angels fits in well with Luke's presentation.[19] It just happens to be the case that one Gospel is not like the other, neither in its style nor its message, and that is a good thing. We should never be too quick to harmonize. And as for the textual question, I think Ehrman's mind, like that of his early fundamentalist teachers, is perhaps too brittle. I myself am open to any author—even a scriptural author—offering more than one edition to his books, as is common today. Even if we discounted suspect passages, the overall effect on our theology would be minimal. Be that as it may, it seems to me that when Ehrman comes across discrepancies for which he can find no answer, he too easily assumes that there is no answer and passes judgment on the text and its author.

Ehrman has taken this basic insight—that the Scriptures are human—to what he thinks is its logical conclusion: if there cannot be certainty about every passage of the New Testament, how can we be sure about any of it? And thus Ehrman began his career of deconstruction in such books as *How Jesus Became God,*[20] *Lost Chrisitianities,*[21] and *Forged*.[22] For the most part, Ehrman served up leftovers and popularized questions. If Ehrman's work results in people actually reading the New Testament, some good may result from bad scholarship.

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[18] Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 11.

[19] For a discussion of Luke 22, see Jerome Neyrey, "The Absence of Jesus' Emotions: The Lukan Redaction of Lk 22:39–46," *Biblica* 61, no. 2 (1980): 153–171. Also, Peter J. Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 98–102.

[20] Bart Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014).

[21] Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scriptures and the Faiths We Know* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2005).

[22] Bart Ehrman, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God—Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011).

IV. The Miracle of the New Testament

Though it is one thing to debate the canonical status of the scriptural books, it is quite another to marvel at the way our Scriptures hold together from a Christian perspective. True diversity has as little to do with so-called hidden gospels as it does with the very fact and composition of the New Testament as it stands today. Compared with the monolithic nature of the Koran, the New Testament is a genuine wonder of openness. The New Testament has eight or nine authors and a series of flawed men, whose tales of grace weave a marvelous story. We ought not shrink from this story, but trumpet it. The New Testament song is not a solo, but a choir piece, sung by various, unlikely voices. The more time I have spent with the New Testament, the more I have come to appreciate its internal structure and growth. The process of canonicity, if we may call it that, came early and can be found in the documents themselves. We know, for example, that there is a certain amount of cross-referencing, with Peter referring to Paul, and Paul to Peter (Gal 2:1–14; 2 Pet 3:15). But at its most basic level, the idea of new scriptures begins with Matthew and finds a kind of canonical fulfillment in Luke.

Matthew: The Fulfillment of Revelation and Scripture

In a remarkable presidential address at the Society for Biblical Literature, D. Moody Smith asked the question: When did the Gospels become scripture?[23] In it Smith argued that both Matthew and Luke wrote their Gospels with the express intent of writing Scripture.[24]

Matthew, not to be subtle, claimed to be writing a new Genesis and the fulfillment of the story of Abraham and David (Matt 1:1). What followed is a genealogy—a decidedly Old Testament form. As Davies and Allison note, Matthew thought of his Gospel as "the continuation of the biblical history—also perhaps that he conceived of his work as belonging to the same literary category as the scriptural cycles treating of Old Testament

[23] I share the opinion of Brevard Childs, who sees an integral relationship between Scripture and canon, which, as he puts it, "distorts the basic theological dynamic of the canonical process by regarding it as a late ecclesiastical valorization." Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1994; first printing 1984), 238.

[24] D. Moody Smith, "When Did the Gospels Become Scripture?," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119, no. 1 (2000): 3–20.

figures."[25] By including in his Gospel five discourses, Matthew turned Jesus into a new and better Moses, whose final word fulfilled and even trumped that which had come before it.[26] Jesus is not only the end of the Abrahamic genealogy, but the end of all genealogies, replacing the fatherhood of Abraham with that of God himself and replacing David's kingship with his own.

On the basis of this interpretation, I could easily imagine a canon, or a Bible that included all the books of the Old Testament, concluding with Matthew as its climax and fulfillment. What better way to end the Scriptures than with an appeal to the Great Commission, as the God of Israel brings his message of salvation to all nations? This certainly would have been much neater and less confusing for the church. Yet it is through Luke that the song of the church goes on.

Luke-Acts: The Canonical Linchpin

Luke, likewise, wrote his document as Scripture. After a decidedly Hellenistic beginning, he took us back to the temple, filling his narrative with a cast of Old Testament figures, like Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon, and Anna. Furthermore, he does Matthew's Abrahamic genealogy one better by including a genealogy that goes all the way back to Adam.[27] His septuagintal writing style in and of itself stands as a claim to scriptural authenticity.[28]

But Luke's writing did more than Matthew's, at least canonically. Matthew wrote as a capstone to the Old Testament—its culmination. Luke, on the other hand, showed the organic unity between the Old Testament and the New. Matthew added his own book to the Old Testament canon, while Luke ensured that the Old Testament canon would be forever included in the New.

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[25] W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, International Critical Commentary Series, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&Y Clark, 1988–1997), 1:423–424.

[26] For further reading, see Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

[27] See D. Moody Smith, "When Did the Gospels Become Scripture?," 8–9. See also Marshal D. Johnson, *The Purpose of Biblical Genealogies*, 2nd ed., Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[28] For the relationship between Luke's style and the Septuagint, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, Anchor Bible Series, vol. 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 113–122.

Even more, Luke extended the canonical boundaries to include within it not only Christ, but the apostolic generation and the apostolic history. In his narrative he told the story of every major character who would become (at that point, had already become) a New Testament author, and he linked them together in such a way as to show that they were all indeed "of one accord." Perhaps this is a greater accomplishment than we might realize. First of all, no matter how orthodox a group might be, and no matter how harmonious the community, there are bound to be rivalries. Certainly this was the case during Jesus' earthly ministry and remained so during the early church: Peter versus John, Peter versus Paul, and Paul versus James, for example. Secondly, almost every New Testament author had a suspect past. Paul was a persecutor who did not know the earthly Jesus. Peter was a denier, and Mark appears to have started out badly. James and Jude may have thought that their brother Jesus was crazy. Matthew's occupation made him a charter member of the despised. John was hot-headed and ambitious, a "Son of Thunder." What Luke does, though, is relate how these unlikely and diverse authors were in one accord, playing their parts as partners in the New Testament story and common guarantors of Jesus' teaching.

Luke offers, if you will, a blurb, or short biography, on every New Testament writer. He took the time to note their faults, but also explained their actions in the kindest ways. And, then, on a greater level, he showed how their lives fit into a greater narrative that was the New Testament church. Luke is the great diplomat and ecumenist of the Great Tradition—the evangelist of the Eighth Commandment. And along the way, he also set aside a couple of characters whose preaching was not to be trusted or at least relied upon. When it comes to dating the New Testament documents, things can get quite tricky, but upon reading Luke, one might say that Luke-Acts serves as a table of contents for the new Christian Scriptures.

Luke's New Testament Flows from the Old

The first thing Luke does is link the New Testament to the Old. Matthew, in a sense, saw his Gospel as the culmination and fulfillment of the Old Testament. But, given that Christ fulfilled the Old Testament, it would have been tempting to demote the Old Testament and to turn it into an unnecessary prologue. Consider, for instance, Jesus' refrain in the Sermon on the Mount, "You have heard it said, but now I say to you." (Matt 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43). One could conclude, on the basis of these words, that the Old Testament, having been fulfilled, was no longer valid.

Luke, though, actively encouraged the continued reading of the Old Testament and proclaimed it as an active and present witness to Christ. On Luke's Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah speak about the Jesus' Exodus, which is in fact his death and resurrection (Luke 9:28–36). In the story of "The Rich Man and Lazarus," Abraham himself endorses Moses and the prophets as present witnesses to Christ (Luke 16:19–21). There is no disjuncture between the past, present, and future. Luke would have us know that the New Testament flows out of the Old and that the Old flows into the New, even as Luke's cup of Passover is followed by the bread of the new Passover, which is in turn followed by the cup of the New Testament.[29]

Though Matthew sees Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament, Luke does Matthew one better by emphasizing that the church, Christ's body, is likewise the fulfillment of the Old Testament. If Jesus's death and resurrection are the culmination of the Old Testament, his earthly ministry is only the beginning of his work. So, Luke begins the book of Acts telling Theophilus and all lovers of God that in his first book he told of all that Jesus had begun to do and teach. Luke would have us know that Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection were a matter of divine necessity in accordance with the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:44). So also, the apostolic and baptismal mission was seen as a matter of divine necessity, in fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures (Luke 24:47–49). For good reason Peter stood at Pentecost with an understanding that his own sermon was in fulfillment of the prophet Joel, and that the New Testament church has been foretold by the prophets. The church itself is a continuation of Israel's story, as the apostles participated in the true and transformed Feast of Pentecost.[30]

Luke and Paul

Perhaps Luke's greatest canonical contribution was to demonstrate how Paul, and therefore his epistles, could be considered authoritative. According to one view, summarized by Brevard Childs, "[T]he canonization of the book of Acts was crucial in providing a historical link between the Gospels and the epistles, and thus served to assure the catho-

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[29] For a discussion of the Lord's Supper as the new Passover, see Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, Anchor Bible Series, vol. 28A (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1389–1390.

[30] For Luke, salvation history is a matter of continuity, not disjuncture. See Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), xlv–xlviii.

licity of Paul within the Church."[31] As we reflect on the situation, this was no small task. The twelve apostles had a claim to authority that was more easily verified. The Twelve publicly represented Jesus during his earthly ministry, as could be attested to by many witnesses. But Paul, a persecutor of the church, could claim no such connection with the earthly Jesus, save an extraordinary encounter of the road to Damascus. Luke therefore went to great pains to demonstrate how Paul could and must be included within the apostolic story.

As with every one of his characters, Luke laid bare the dark side, noting his subjects' faults. Luke did not sugarcoat Paul's role in the death of Stephen or his zealotry in persecution of and breathing murderous threats on the early Christians.[32] Luke went on, however, to explain how Paul became an apostle and could be trusted as a result. For good reason, Luke told the story of Paul's conversion three times (Acts 9:3–19; 22:6–21; 26:12–18). The retelling of this story underlined the veracity of Paul's claim. Ananias, a trusted figure, had his own vision attesting to Paul's commission to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). But even more, Luke would have us know that Paul can be trusted because of his willingness to suffer for Christ's name (Acts 9:16). Indeed, Luke described Paul's arrest and imprisonment in ways similar to that of Christ. Paul fulfilled Jesus' words that the apostles would be led away to "kings and governors because of my name" (Luke 21:12–13).[33]

Luke, however, did more. As some have noted, the Paul of Acts appears different than the Paul of the epistles. This is for good reason. Luke was intent on the evidence that demonstrated that Paul was no strange or idiosyncratic teacher, but that his ministry carried on the very ministry of the known apostles. Luke accomplished this through the use of literary parallelism. Everything Paul did has a precedent in the ministry of Peter. Thus, Paul healed a cripple (Acts 14:8–11), as did Peter (Acts 3:1–10). Paul raised Eutychus (Acts 20:7–12), even as Peter raised Tabitha (Acts 9:36–43). Paul was miraculously freed from prison (Acts 16:25–37), as was Peter

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[31] Childs, *The New Testament as Canon*, 237–238.

[32] For a helpful exposition on Paul's persecution, especially its ongoing nature, see Darrel L. Bock, *Acts,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 317–320.

[33] See Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation, Vol. 2: The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 290–291.

(Acts 12:6–17). And as Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons had the power of healing (Acts 19:11), so also did Peter's shadow (Acts 5:12–16).[34]

Even more, Paul's Gentile ministry was anticipated by Peter, who also had a vision that propelled him to bring his mission to the Gentiles (Acts 10:9–16). Even as Paul became a minister to the uncircumcised, so also did Peter (Acts 11:1–18). The literary connection between the two apostles came to a climax when Peter introduced Paul at the Council of Jerusalem, a public event, at which the whole church was represented by the apostles and elders.

Thus, in every way, Luke homogenized Paul, smoothed out the rough edges, and dressed him up to look like Peter, especially as a fulfillment of Christ's own trials. This is not a matter of fabrication or falsification but is Luke at his churchly best, showing how all the members of the body work together in one accord towards a common good. The one imprisoned in Rome carried on the ministry of the child born in the days of Caesar Augustus. And his writings can be trusted even by us today.

V. Luke's Witness to the Emerging Fourfold Gospel

While Luke's defense of Paul is well known, Luke played a similar, albeit more limited, role in presenting and defending other would-be New Testament authors. In fact, Luke paved the way for a fourfold Gospel, introducing us to each of the authors and placing them squarely within the tradition and story of Christ's church. And for each evangelist, Luke offered a backstory and a defense of their place within the church.

For good reason, Luke tipped his hat to Matthew. Literarily, he placed his own Gospel as an "Exodus" to Matthew's "Genesis." And if Matthew's reputation as a tax collector was scandalous, Luke tackled the issue head-on (Luke 5:27–32). The major players among the apostles were Peter, James, and John, who formed a kind of apostolic triumvirate. And Luke tellingly recorded Christ's individual call of only one other apostle: Matthew. By telling of Levi's conversion, as Arthur Just notes, "Luke acknowledges his predecessor."[35] If it was scandalous that Jesus ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners, how much more so that he called

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[34] This is the same kind of literary patterning that Luke used with Jesus and John the Baptist. See Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, 313–314.

[35] Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1—9:50*, Concordia Commentary Series (St. Louis: Concordia, 1996), 242.

one to be an evangelist? Yet, just as Luke vouched for Paul, he did the same for Matthew.

Likewise, Luke told the story of John Mark, whose own pedigree was dubious. Mark was evidently well-known to the apostles, who met at the home of his mother in Jerusalem (Acts 4:36). Yet Mark's own false start was widely known to the church. He first joined the missionary team of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 12:25) and journeyed with them to Cyprus (Acts 13:5). Yet, when Paul and Barnabas arrived at Perga in Pamphylia, he mysteriously left them and went home to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). When Paul and Barnabas readied themselves for their second missionary journey, Paul refused to take along Mark, since he had abandoned them previously in Pamphylia. As Luke described the situation, there was a "sharp disagreement" (Acts 15:39). Barnabas, however, would not be not be dissuaded and took Mark with him to Cyprus. The question might have arisen: who made the right decision? Could Mark, who was never again mentioned in Acts, be redeemed? We do know from Colossians that Mark came back into Paul's good graces (Col 4:10), as well as into his association with Peter (1 Pet 5:13). And, it seems, the Book of Acts anticipates Mark's redemption through Barnabas. Indeed, the figure of Barnabas is significant, for there is nothing negative to be said about him. Barnabas, an early missionary, is given the laudatory title, "Son of Encouragement," whose generous spirit can be seen when he laid the proceeds from his field at the feet of the apostles (Acts 4:36). We then meet Barnabas as the one who stood up for Paul and spoke on his behalf to the other apostles (Acts 9:26–30). The indication seems to be that even as Barnabas was right to stand up for Paul, so also he was right when he stood up for Mark. Mark's place in the church was thus made possible, or at least explained.

Finally, Luke goes to great pains to show that the apostle John belonged rightly within the church. And indeed, this might be a fact that is taken too easily for granted. We see within the Gospels themselves a tension between the Sons of Thunder and Peter. The mother of the sons of Zebedee approached Jesus, petitioning him that her sons might sit at his right and left hand in his kingdom. Their associates understood, "And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers" (Matt 20:24; also, Mark 10:41). Given that Peter, James, and John served as a kind of triumvirate, with Peter always in the place of primacy (Matt 10:2), the request of James and John was all the more brazen—a power play against Peter's purported leadership.

Others have noted a possible rivalry between Peter and John in the Gospel of John. Throughout the Gospel of John, Peter's role is down-played. John's is the only Gospel to note that Jesus called Andrew first, and that Peter only came later, through Andrew. Peter's great confession, a high point in each of the synoptics, is omitted in John, replaced by confessions by Nathanael (John 1:49), Martha (John 11:27), and Thomas (John 20:28). If the tradition is right, John portrayed himself as the beloved disciple, who rested his head in the Lord's bosom and stood by the cross where he received Jesus' mother as his own (John 19:26). Twice, John has told us, he arrived at the tomb "first" and underlined the fact that he actually "believed" (John 20:8). Concerning this evidence, David Dungan writes, "there is a long-standing riddle in the field of Gospel studies: Why did it take so long for the Gospel of John to become accepted and used in Rome as well as in Asia Minor, the place where most scholars agree that it was written?"[36] Dungan adds, "We have discovered a deep and pervasive pattern of antagonism between John and Peter (more precisely John towards Peter), their respective followers, and the Gospels later given in their names."[37]

Whether or not one agrees with Dungan's assessment, Luke would have his readers know that Peter and John were partners, in full communion. In the story of Peter's calling, Luke emphasized the fact that James and John were his colleagues. Luke is the only evangelist who related how the Lord instructed Peter and John to prepare the Passover together (Luke 22:8). And in the Book of Acts, Luke repeatedly placed John by Peter's side (Acts 3:6, 11–26; 4:8–17). Whatever divisions there may have been, John was clearly part of the New Testament story, in communion and partnership with Peter.

James and Jude: Brothers

We know from the Gospels that Jesus had both sisters and brothers, and that the names of his brothers were James, Joses, Simon, and Jude (Matt 13:55–56; Mark 6:3). We also know that there was some friction between Jesus and his family. When Mary and his brothers came to Jesus and called on him, Jesus replied curtly, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" He added, "For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:33–35). The Gospel of Mark numbers the twelve apostles and immediately follows the list with a description of his earthly family: "Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to

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[36] David Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 23.

[37] Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem*, 25.

seize him, for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind'" (Mark 3:20–21). The Gospel of John underlines the divisions between Jesus and his brothers. In chapter seven, Jesus' brothers seem to challenge him to do miracles publicly, to which John adds, "For not even his brothers believed in him" (John 7:5).

How then could we conclude that after Jesus' resurrection his brothers could be trusted as reliable sources? Luke did so in his description of the early church's foundation in Acts 1. In this chapter, not only did Luke name the eleven remaining apostles and tell the story of Matthias' inclusion, but he also included in his story a mention of Jesus' earthly family. Thus, "All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, *and his brothers*" (Acts 1:14; emphasis added). For Luke, the family of Jesus was, in some way, foundational for the church, indicating that members of Christ's family would become major players in the church as well. In addition, Mary's role here was not insignificant, for the Mary who was present at Christ's birth, by the power of the Holy Spirit, stands in testimony to James and Jude and to the entirety of the church, now born in the Spirit of Pentecost.

The second question is one of doctrine. As we know, our own Martin Luther had problems with the Epistle of James, especially over the supposed discrepancy between James and Paul concerning their teachings on faith and good works. But we know that even in the New Testament era there was an underlying tension between Paul and Jerusalem. Paul tells us in Galatians that he received the right hand of fellowship from James, Peter, and John (Gal 2:9). Yet we also know that his dispute with Peter occurred when "certain men came from James" (Gal 2:12). There could not help but be some tension between Paul, the apostle of uncircumcision, and James of Jerusalem. Certainly, there was a cultural divide and a divide in practice, if not also in doctrine. But, Luke did his best to show that Paul and James were in fact partners in the Gospel, and that James wholeheartedly endorsed Paul's ministry. This can be seen by the role that James played at the Council of Jerusalem, where he blessed Paul's ministry (Acts 15:13–21). Even more, Luke showed how James proved helpful to Paul. In Jerusalem, there was no small amount of consternation over the fact that Paul taught "all the Jews who were among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to their customs" (Acts 21:21). James' solution was that Paul should take a temporary Nazarite vow, purifying himself and presenting an offering for himself at the temple. This was no small thing. It would have been very easy to imagine a Christianity associated with James and another Christianity associated with Paul, but Luke paved the way for understanding how these two distinct figures also worked and acted in one accord, so that even their respective writings could inhabit what would become the New Testament.

VI. Conclusion

Admittedly, this study does not pretend to offer a solution to the problem of canon, if there is indeed a solution. We Christians, however, do need to speak positively in this area. Acknowledging the messy history of its formation is hardly a matter of shame. Yet, at the same time, we need to let people know that the pieces were in place from the beginning. Nothing in the early church happened in a corner—neither the ministry of Jesus nor of his apostles. There were many witnesses to it all, both on the inside and out. And even more, these writings were well-known, as were their authors. The manuscripts were never hidden away in a closet, but they were read regularly in the church. Though the story of the New Testament church is messy but cohesive, its very diversity attests to its authenticity.

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The Relevance of the *Homologoumena* and *Antilegomena* Distinction for the New Testament Canon Today: Revelation as a Test Case

Charles A. Gieschen

I. The New Testament Canon in Recent and Ancient History

Two very significant developments have occurred in recent decades that provide important reasons for taking up again the subject of canon. First, *within the church* there is a growing erosion of the authoritative function of canonical writings in the lives of individual Christians and various Christian denominations. While it appears that some understanding that God reveals himself somehow and somewhere through the canonical writings remains among many Christians and Christian churches, the confession that these writings are the word of God and the sole source of authority for all Christian teaching and life is largely a minority understanding among Christians in the United States. The most vivid example of this erosion is that the teaching of the Scriptures on moral issues as basic as sexuality and marriage is no longer authoritative for many Christians and their churches. Among a significant number of Christians, homosexual orientation is considered a creation of God that is as natural as heterosexual orientation, and same-sex marriage is an estate blessed by God.[1] Renewed attention to the study of the unique and authoritative content of the canonical writings by distinguishing clearly between these sacred, revelatory writings and other religious literature is at least one important step in stemming the erosion of their authoritative function. It should also be noted here that there is a distinct difference between the current situation and the one faced in the early church. In the earlier context, there was widespread recognition of the documents of the New Testament having divine origins and thus an authoritative function in the church, even as there were other documents circulating that also claimed to be authoritative. Today there are significant doubts among some Christians about any New Testament writing having divine origins; thus, the divine auth-

[1] One can read such a perspective in Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014).

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ority of these documents is questioned, and they are regarded as the wisdom of men about God conditioned by their context and culture.

Second, *within some parts of the academy* there is a growing marginalization of canonical writings through claims that these writings privilege the message of the orthodox minority rather than the broadly diverse majority of Christianity in the earliest centuries.[2] This has resulted in calls to study multiple early Gospels, including the Gnostic Gospels, alongside the four canonical Gospels and to regard the canonical epistolary literature as merely pastoral advice that was dependent on context, like that of so many other pastors or church fathers who wrote in subsequent centuries. The pattern that the Jesus Seminar introduced when its members put the Gospel of Thomas alongside the canonical Gospels in their publication *The Five Gospels* has continued to multiply.[3] One prominent example is Bart Ehrman's introduction to the New Testament published by Oxford University Press and used as the standard text for courses on the New Testament at many colleges and universities.[4] Although this is an introduction to the New Testament, he includes a chapter entitled "Jesus from Different Perspectives: Other Gospels in Early Christianity," which begins: "Many people don't realize that lots of Christian Gospels did *not* make it into the New Testament."[5] Another example of this desire to break down the canonical distinction is *A New New Testament: A Reinvented Bible for the 21st Century Combining Traditional and Newly Discovered Texts*, edited with commentary by Hal Taussig.[6] Whereas Maricon cut out portions of the New Testament that he considered too Jewish, Taussig pastes in other noncanonical literature alongside the canonical documents in an attempt to blur the canonical distinction. An even more recent and sensationalist example is *The Lost Gospel* by Simcha Jacobovici and Barrie Wilson.[7]

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[2] This is the so-called "Bauer hypothesis" popularized by Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity,* trans. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

[3] Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

[4] Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[5] Ehrman, *The New Testament,* 195 (emphasis original).

[6] Hal Taussig, ed., *A New New Testament: A Reinvented Bible for the 21st Century Combining Traditional and Newly Discovered Texts* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Hardcourt, 2013).

[7] Simcha Jacobovici and Barrie Wilson, *The Lost Gospel: Decoding the Ancient Text that Reveals Jesus' Marriage to Mary the Magdalene* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2014).

Jacobovici is the cinematographer who made a splash in 2007 on the Discovery Channel with his film and book *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*.[8] His recent book is another effort to discredit the historical portrait of the canonical Gospels by elevating a late and unreliable document as a historical source alongside the canonical Gospels, especially now that the Coptic fragment called the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* has been shown to be a forgery.[9] Finally, one can easily project that an even greater marginalizing of the study of New Testament literature will continue in the academy with the shift to studying it alongside the literature of other major religions. This shift, driven by culture and market, is already taking place.[10] It is the move from studying the diversity within early and present Christianity to focusing on the diversity within the global religious milieu, both ancient and modern. In this context, the Bible is not the sole source of theology but is one source among many sources of religious wisdom.

It is important to express at the beginning of this study the understanding of the historical process of establishing the New Testament canon that is assumed in the discussion below. Although the focus of this study is on the New Testament canon, it must be stated that the existence of a Jewish canon—later called the "Old Testament" by Christians—as authoritative revelation is an extremely important reason that helps explain the rapid embracing of the writings that came to be known as the New Testament as authoritative Scriptures.[11] The evangelists and apostles continued the pattern of Moses and the prophets not only in preaching, but also in writing. Acknowledging the significant influence of the Jewish canon for any discussion of the origins of the New Testament canon, there are two contrasting ways of understanding the historical process of how the New Testament came to be. Either one understands it as a third- and fourth-century process whereby a few church leaders decided what was authoritative and what was not, or one understands it as a process of the

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[8] See the analysis of the film in Charles A. Gieschen, "The Lost Tomb of Jesus?," *CTQ* 71 (2007): 199–200.

[9] See Charles A. Gieschen, "The *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*: A Modern Forgery?," *CTQ* 76 (2012): 335–337.

[10] It has been going on in the American university setting for some time, but now is also happening in seminaries. For example, the first students to complete the Master of Divinity in Interfaith Chaplaincy program at Claremont School of Theology graduated in 2015; see "A Dream Realized: CST's First Graduating Class of the Master of Divinity in Interfaith Chaplaincy," last modified October 7, 2015, http://cst.edu/a-dream-realized-csts-first-graduating-class-of-the-master-of-divinity-in-interfaith-chaplaincy/.

[11] For a discussion of the Old Testament canon, see Andrew E. Steinmann, *The Oracles of God: The Old Testament Canon* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999).

wider church confirming the books that had long been recognized and used extensively as authoritative Scriptures from the first century onwards, primarily motivated by the false claims of sectarian literature that surfaced in the second and third centuries. This study works with the understanding of the canonical process in this second manner; the church formally recognizing at a later date what had long been read and used as the Scriptures. Kurt Aland described this process in this manner:

> In establishing the Canon, the Church authorities of the second and succeeding centuries only *subsequently* ratified the decisions which had already been reached by the Christian communities, or more exactly, by the individual believers. The organized Church as such did not create the Canon; it recognized the Canon which had already been created. It is only from the second half of the fourth century onwards, in connexion with the closing of the Canon, that the Church authorities began to have any effect.[12]

The church did not create a New Testament canon in the fourth century; it acknowledged the canon that was in use for three centuries.

Brevard Childs makes a similar point, stressing that the process of canon goes back to the time of the writing of the documents:

> It is assumed by many that the formation of a canon is a late, ecclesiastical activity, external to the biblical literature itself, which was subsequently imposed on the writings. . . . Rather, it is crucial to see that the issue of canon turns on the authoritative role played by particular traditions for a community of faith and practice. Canon consciousness thus arose at the inception of the Christian church and lies deep within the New Testament literature itself. There is an organic continuity in the historical process of the development of an established canon of sacred writings from the earliest stages of the New Testament to the final canonical stabilization of its scope.[13]

To put it simply: the canonical process was more a process of the church excluding sectarian literature than it was a process of the church deciding whether the *antilegomena* should be included in the canon.

For this reason, the canonical criteria that are discussed by scholars are criteria that were used much more in excluding documents from the canon than in including documents that were already widely acknowledged as

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[12] Kurt Aland, *The Problem of the New Testament Canon*, Contemporary Studies in Theology 2 (London: A.G. Mowbrey and Company, 1962), 18 (emphasis original).

[13] Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1994), 21–22.

Scripture.[14] The primary criterion is apostolic authorship; most of the literature regarded as authoritative by the church was written by an apostle (like Matthew, John, Peter, or Paul) or a close associate of an apostle (like Mark or Luke). If its authorship could not be connected to an apostle in the first century, doubts arose or the document was simply rejected. Antiquity itself is not a solid criterion for canon, since some heretical writings followed closely on the heels of the orthodox writings, or even may have, in a few cases, preceded them. There are few New Testament books, however, where the authorship is unknown, most prominently Hebrews. Although some early Christians sought to solve this problem by claiming that this epistle was written by Paul, the question concerning the authority of such writings was primarily answered by the use of the criterion of apostolic teaching, especially teaching about the person and work of Christ. Hebrews and other disputed writings, including Revelation, were primarily recognized as authoritative revelation because their content was congruent with the apostolic teaching of earliest Christianity as evidenced later in written documents like the four Gospels, Acts, and Paul's Epistles. For Luther, this criterion trumped all others: authoritative Scripture always teaches Christ and his work faithfully and clearly.[15] Closely related to the criteria of apostolic authorship and apostolic teaching is the early and consistent use of these writings by the faithful of the church.

What does all this have to do with the *homologoumena* and *antilegomena* distinction that exists within discussions of the New Testament canon? It is important to begin by explaining what this distinction is. *Homologoumena* (ὁμολογουμένα) refers to books "universally recognized" within the church, and *antilegomena* (ἀντιλεγομένα) refers to books that were "disputed," meaning that some in the church expressed doubts about them. The primary source for these terms is Eusebius (early fourth century). Which books fit into these two categories? Twenty of the twenty-seven books that make up the New Testament canon had overwhelming acceptance from the beginning: the four Gospels, Acts, the thirteen Epistles of Paul, 1 Peter, and 1 John. These are the *homologoumena*. The remaining seven, about which some questions were raised by some in the church, were considered the disputed books, the *antilegomena*: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John,

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[14] For a discussion of some typical canonical criteria, see Lee Martin McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Canon* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 146–163.

[15] See J. A. O. Preus, "The New Testament Canon in the Lutheran Dogmaticians," *Concordia Journal* 36 (2010): 134. This is a reprint of the original article found in *The Springfielder* 25, no. 1 (1961): 8–33. Subsequent citations of this article are to the version reprinted in *Concordia Journal.*

Jude, and the Book of Revelation. Because of the importance of this distinction within discussions of the New Testament canon, the words of Eusebius on the matter are included here:

> At this point it seems reasonable to summarize the writings of the New Testament which have been quoted. In the first place should be put the holy tetrad of the Gospels. To them follows the writing of the Acts of the Apostles. After this should be reckoned the Epistles of Paul. Following them the Epistle of John called the first, and in the same way should be recognized the epistle of Peter. In addition to these should be put, if it seem desirable, the Revelation of John, the arguments concerning which we will expound at the proper time. These belong to the Recognized Books [ὁμολογουμένοις]. Of the Disputed Books [ἀντιλεγομένων] which are nevertheless known to most are the Epistle called of James, that of Jude, the second Epistle of Peter, and the so-called second and third epistles of John which may be the work of the evangelists or of some other with the same name. Among the books which are not genuine [τοῖς νόθοις] must be reckoned the Acts of Paul, the work entitled the Shepherd, the Apocalypse of Peter, and in addition to them the letter called of Barnabas and the so-called Teachings of the Apostles. And in addition, as I said, the Revelation of John, if this view prevail. For, as I said, some reject it, but others count it among the Recognized Books.[16]

Not only does Eusebius express the *homologoumena* and *antilegomena* distinction, but he also has the following ordering of importance for the *homologoumena*: the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles of Paul, 1 John, and 1 Peter. The rest are antilegomena, although Revelation was considered *homologoumena* by some and even "not genuine" by others. It is noteworthy that in this context Eusebius expresses not only a distinction between *homologoumena* and *antilegomena,* but also a distinction between the *antilegomena* and the *notha* ("not genuine" or "spurious" writings).[17] Canonical lists were not meant to remove the *antilegomena* from use but to prevent spurious writings from use alongside the Scriptures by some Christians.

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[16] This translation of the Greek text of Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.25.1–6, is from *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History,* trans. Kirsopp Lake, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), 257–259.

[17] *Hist. eccl.* 3.25.7 also mentions a fourth category of writings: "wicked and impious writings."

The *homologoumena* and *antilegomena* distinction played a role for Martin Luther as is visible in his introductions to New Testament books.[18] It has continued to play a role in our Lutheran dogmatic tradition, although of lesser importance than to Luther, but nevertheless to the point that Chemnitz, Osiander, and others advocated that Christian doctrine should not be drawn or taught from the *antilegomena*. Chemnitz and later Lutheran dogmaticians, however, actually drew rather freely on the *antilegomena* in doctrinal writings.[19] It is ironic that the two primary proof-texts for the divine nature of the Scriptures, 2 Timothy 3:15 and 2 Peter 1:21, are both from the *antilegomena*. It is not the intent of this study to diminish the importance of the *homologoumena* and *antilegomena* distinction when it comes to the discussion of the historical process through which various writings were acknowledged as the authoritative word of God or even the role this distinction had in the early history of Lutheranism.

This study, however, will demonstrate that our focus as Lutheran pastors in the twenty-first century context should be on cultivating respect for the apostolic content of the entire New Testament canon within the church, rather than creating doubts about the authority and value of particular writings by appealing to the *homologoumena-antilegomena* distinction. The authority of the documents in the canon comes from their apostolic content, not from their being in the canon. The canon simply acknowledges their apostolic content. In the present context, it is unhelpful to dismiss or discourage the reading of particular books of the New Testament because they are *antilegomena* or not to use these same writings to teach Christian doctrine and nurture Christian faith. To question their authorship should not lead one to disregard their content. Although there will always be a functional canon within one's formal canon—namely, that some books are more central to the life of the church like the four Gospels—nevertheless, it is unhelpful to the church and our witness to the world when we individually or corporately narrow the canon by not using the *antilegomena* for Christian faith and life. Many confessional Lutherans get very irritated with critical scholars who dismiss some of the Pauline letters as deutero-Pauline and not authentic (e.g., 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians,

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[18] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986), 35:357–411. Hereafter AE. Especially well-known are his introductions to James, Jude, and Revelation. See also the discussion of Luther and canon in Brooke Foss Westcott, *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament*, 6th ed. (1889; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 480–486.

[19] This point is made by Preus, "The New Testament Canon," 135–146.

and the Pastorals), yet they can be charged with a similar practice if they use the *antilegomena* label as reason to diminish or dismiss the authoritative function of particular books of the New Testament.

II. The Book of Revelation as a Test Case

Why pick the book of Revelation as an example of a disputed book that should not be marginalized in the canon? Brevard Childs states, "No book within the New Testament exhibits such a wide range of disagreement on its interpretation. The controversy extends from the early church fathers to modern times, and has engaged many of the most brilliant minds, often with disastrous results."[20] Revelation's status in the early church has some clouds over it. Although Eusebius states that some regarded it among the *homolegoumena*, most have regarded it among the *antilegomena*. Its acceptance and use was much stronger in the Western church than in the East, probably due to the problems that arose in the East with Montanism.[21] It is a long-standing tradition that Revelation is not used for lectionary readings in the Eastern Orthodox Church.[22] The study of Revelation is far from embraced by most Lutheran pastors, in part due to Luther's pronouncements on the book that will be discussed below and in part due to the distinctive content of Revelation as visionary prophecy in line with Old Testament visionary prophecy that receives little attention from many Lutherans, especially Ezekiel, Daniel 7–12, and Zechariah.

One fact to which the detractors of Revelation's position in the canon point is the limited evidence of its widespread use in the first few centuries of Christianity. There are not nearly as many early manuscript copies of Revelation as there are of the Gospels or Pauline Epistles.[23] In fact, there are only six papyri manuscripts dating from second to the sixth century, five of which are very fragmentary. Papyrus 47 is the most important early manuscript for Revelation, a third-century papyrus manuscript that contains Revelation 9:10—17:2. There are only eleven extant uncial manuscripts, dating from the fourth to the tenth centuries, four of which contain the complete text. Of these, Codex Alexandrinus is the most important

[20] Childs, *The New Testament as Canon*, 502.

[21] Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 105.

[22] William C. Weinrich, *Revelation,* Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament XII (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), xx.

[23] This evidence is presented in Louis H. Brighton, *Revelation,* Concordia Commentary Series (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999), 26–27.

early uncial for Revelation because it retains many of the semiticisms in Revelation that tended to be corrected by copyists, including the transcriber of Papyrus 47.

Although doubts have been expressed about apostolic authorship, namely whether the seer John was truly the apostle John due to significant differences between the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation, the tradition that the author was the apostle John is quite strong among the early church fathers, including Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Origen.[24] Dionysius of Alexandria (AD 247–265), however, is an early voice expressing strong opinions that the Gospel and the Apocalypse could not have been written by the same person.[25] Thus, apostolic authorship did not give Revelation a pass that it could have ridden into the canon.

One cannot overestimate the impact of Martin Luther's opinions about the Book of Revelation on the study and use of Revelation within the Lutheran church. Because Luther specifically mentions one of the central canonical criteria discussed above, apostolic content, when rendering an assessment of this book in his "Preface to the Revelation of St. John (1522)," his entire opinion will be presented here before rebutting it:

> About this book of the Revelation of John, I leave everyone free to hold his own opinions. I would not have anyone bound to my opinion or judgment. I say what I feel. I miss more than one thing in this book, *and it makes me consider it to be neither apostolic nor prophetic.* First and foremost, *the apostles do not deal with visions*, but prophesy in clear and plain words, as do Peter and Paul, and Christ in the Gospel. For it befits the apostolic office to speak clearly of Christ and his deeds, without images and visions. Moreover *there is no prophet in the Old Testament, to say nothing of the New, who deals so exclusively with visions and images*. For myself, I think it approximates the Fourth Book of Esdras; *I can in no way detect that the Holy Spirit produced it*. Moreover he seems to me to be going much too far when he commends his own book so highly (Revelation 22)—indeed, more than any of the other sacred books do, though they are much more important—and threatens that if anyone takes away anything from it, God will take away from him, etc. Again, they are supposed to be blessed who keep what is written in this book; and yet no one knows what that is, to say nothing of keeping it. This is just the same as if we did not have the book at all. And there are many far better books available for us to

[24] Weinrich, *Revelation*, xvii–xx.

[25] Weinrich, *Revelation*, xviii.

> keep. Many of the fathers also rejected this book a long time ago; although St. Jerome, to be sure, refers to it in exalted terms and says that it is above all praise and that there are as many mysteries in it as words. Still, Jerome cannot prove this at all, and his praise at numerous places is too generous. Finally, let everyone think of it as his own spirit leads him. My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book. For me this is reason enough not to think highly of it: *Christ is neither taught nor known in it*. But to teach Christ, this is the thing which an apostle is bound above all else to do; as Christ says in Acts 1:8, "You shall be my witnesses." Therefore I stick to the books which present Christ to me clearly and purely.[26]

As is well known from his prefaces to the New Testament books, Luther's primary criterion for canonicity was the clear proclamation of Christ from the document. He concluded here that "Christ is neither taught nor known" in the Book of Revelation. With the evidence below, this study will demonstrate that Christ is indeed taught "clearly and purely" in the Book of Revelation, proving how wrong Luther was in his assessment. Furthermore, Luther's opinion that this book is "neither apostolic nor prophetic" is also faulty. It is my conviction, from over thirty years of research, writing, and teaching related to Revelation, that the apostolic teaching present in Revelation, especially regarding the person and work of Christ, is the basis for why this book has been recognized as authoritative Scripture, certainly more important than its possible apostolic authorship (i.e., the author "John" being identified as the apostle John, son of Zebedee).[27] Luther is also wrong in asserting that "no prophet in the Old Testament . . . deals so exclusively with visions and images." If one reads Ezekiel, Daniel 7–12, and Zechariah 1–7, one will find the Old Testament visionary prophecy that preceded and found its fulfillment in the Book of Revelation. Like Luther, many Lutherans may not feel comfortable with visionary prophecy in either the Old or New Testaments, but if God is comfortable with giving it, then we should study it and even delight in what it reveals. Indeed, it is specifically because interpreters have narrowed their personal canons and not immersed themselves in

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[26] AE 35:398–399 (emphasis added). It is noteworthy that Luther wrote a much-expanded and more positive preface in 1530 that was revised near the end of his life in 1546; see AE 35:399–411. What seems to have excited Luther about Revelation, according this later preface, was his identification of various heretics and heresies in the book, not necessarily its teaching of the person and work of Christ.

[27] For what it is worth, I value the book of Revelation as apostolic teaching in spite of my conclusion that the apostle John, the son of Zebedee who wrote the Gospel and Epistles of John, is not the author of Revelation.

these Old Testament canonical books that they feel out of place and uncomfortable in Revelation.

III. Does the Book of Revelation Proclaim Christ Clearly and Purely?

One of the key problems that interpreters of Revelation encounter, including Luther and many Lutherans, is not taking the claim of the first three words of this book seriously: Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ("The unveiling of Jesus Christ"). The clear and pure proclamation of the person and work of Christ is a hallmark of this book.[28] Powerful portraits of Christ are repeatedly presented in the visionary prophecy, beginning with the vision of Christ that spans Rev 1:12—3:20. There John beholds the risen Christ as a glorious "one like a son of man." He is seeing the same eternal son in a long, flowing robe seen by Isaiah in his call vision, by Ezekiel repeatedly in his book—especially the opening vision recorded in Ezekiel 1—as the Glory of YHWH, and finally by Daniel as the one like a son of man in chapters 7 and 10 of his visionary prophecy. This Christ, who is so grounded in the Old Testament revelation of YHWH, is the one who says to John, "I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I died, and behold I am living forevermore, and I have the keys to Death and Hades" (Rev 1:17b–18). What is the primary characteristic highlighted by Jesus' words? Not that he is the eternal Son who existed before creation, but that he is the flesh and blood Son who truly died (ἐγενόμην νεκρός) and now lives forever (ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων). His incarnation, death by crucifixion, and victorious resurrection are not hidden away but are trumpeted out by the very first words of Jesus in this book. He is seen in the midst of the lampstands, truly and really present on this earth with his bride the church, having the seven pastors of the seven churches in his right hand, the safe place where he holds all of his faithful messengers. This flesh and blood crucified and risen Jesus continues to be front and center in this opening scene and throughout his dictating of the seven letters (Rev 2:1—3:22).[29]

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[28] For a more extensive discussion of the Christology of Revelation, see Charles A. Gieschen, "The Lamb (Not the Man) on the Divine Throne," *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal*, ed. David B. Capes, April D. DeConick, Helen K. Bond, and Troy A. Miller (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 221–243 (with notes on 427–432).

[29] The ongoing revelation of Jesus throughout the dictating of the seven letters in Revelation 2–3 is reinforced by the mention of details to each church from the appearance of the risen Christ at the beginning of the visionary experience (Rev 1:12–16).

The next scene of this visionary prophecy, the most important scene in the entire book because it is the revelation of the ultimate mystery of God's presence in the divine throne room, begins in chapter 4 and climaxes in chapter 5 with this amazing and powerful revelation of Jesus:

> [6] And in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders I saw a Lamb standing as though it had been slaughtered, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. [7] And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. [8] And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. [9] And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed people for God."[30]

This worship scene goes on. If a picture speaks a thousand words, then this vision is at least a 10,000 word essay or even a full volume on Christology. The Lamb is depicted in the midst (*ἐν μέσῳ*) of the divine throne (Rev 5:6).[31] Because no one other than God occupies this throne, this vision is trumpeting the full divinity of this Lamb.[32] Why "a lamb" (*ἀρνίον*), when one would expect to see Christ as the glorious "one like a son of man" who appeared in chapters 1–3? The Passover Lamb imagery here emphasizes the humanity of Jesus, his bloodied and slaughtered appearance proclaims the sacrifice that defines the Lamb, and his standing posture proclaims his resurrection victory. The seven horns proclaim the full divinity of this little lamb as a powerful ram, and his seven eyes testify of the fullness of the Holy Spirit with whom he is united. This Lamb-Christology is also congruent with the Christology Christians weekly experience in the Lord's Supper as they receive there the body and blood of this Passover Lamb (cf. 1 Cor 5:7). The worship of this Lamb shows his oneness with the Father, who also is the object of worship. The unity of worshipping the Father and the Son as the one God is expressed most forcefully in the final part of this throne room scene (Rev 5:13–14):

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[30] The translation is the author's.

[31] The ESV translation here, "in between," is less clear and makes it more difficult to express the theological significance of the Lamb having a position "in the middle" of God's throne.

[32] For a discussion of the significance of enthronement in Second Temple Judaism, see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 152–181.

> [13] And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" [14] And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshipped.

Is it not ironic that some Lutherans have argued that Revelation should not be a source of Christian doctrine, but this scene and song from Revelation 5 is currently a major source of teaching about Christ and the Lord's Supper each Sunday in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) through its use in the liturgy, specifically the text of "This is the Feast" in Divine Service, Settings One and Two of *Lutheran Service Book*?[33] Without doubt, Christ is being taught in Revelation 5 clearly and purely.

The Lamb, a title used twenty-eight times in Revelation, is the dominant portrait of Christ in this visionary prophecy.[34] It is the Lamb who then opens the seven seals of the book, each of the first six unleashing various maladies depicted in chapter 6, showing his control over the future. It is this Lamb who is seen again when we flash forward in chapter 7 to "the great multitude that on one could number . . . standing before the throne and the Lamb" after the Last Day resurrection when this little lamb is also "the shepherd" who guides the saints "to springs of living water" and "wipes away every tear" (Rev 7:17). In chapter 14, the Lamb is seen again in the midst of 144,000, the church militant, affirming that this Lamb is not only enthroned in heavenly glory but is also present in the midst of his church militant during the daily struggles she endures (Rev 14:1–5). And finally, the Lamb appears on the throne again in chapter 22 in the heavenly Jerusalem, a scene that once realized will go on for all eternity (Rev 22:1–5).

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[33] *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 155, 171–172. For historical background on how this canticle came to be used by Lutherans, see John Warwick Montgomery, "An Historical Study of the *Dignus Est Agnus* Canticle," *CTQ* 68 (2004): 145–153. This is a little-known article, in part because Montgomery used the Latin title to this canticle that has been known primarily by the English title "This is the Feast of Victory." The Latin title for this canticle, it should be noted, appears in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1941), 122.

[34] For the number and significance of the titles used for Jesus in Revelation, see Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 1–37. No other name/title for Christ is used so frequently in Revelation. For example, the second most frequent designation is the name "Jesus," which occurs fourteen times.

Christ, who appeared as the glorious man-like form of God in chapters 1–3, appears in similar form in several other scenes of this visionary prophecy.[35] He is probably the angel ascending from the east in Revelation 7:1–4 who has the seal of the living God and commands that the 144,000 be sealed with it, a depiction of Baptism with the divine name.[36] He is likely the angel functioning as the heavenly high priest in Revelation 8:3–5 who throws the censer to earth. He is clearly the mighty angel with the scroll in Revelation 10:1–11 who offers the prophet John the scroll to eat even as the Glory of YHWH gave the scroll to the prophet Ezekiel. He is the glorious one like a son of man coming on clouds to harvest the earth in Revelation 14:14–20. He is the rider of the white horse in Revelation 19:11–21 clothed in a robe dipped in blood with a sharp sword coming out of his mouth as he carries out the final battle. He is the angel who binds Satan in Revelation 20:1–3. The entire book, from start to finish, is truly what it claims to be: Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Not only is Christ taught clearly and purely in this book, but even more extensively and powerfully than in some other apostolic writings of the New Testament.

IV. Should We Use the Book of Revelation to Teach Doctrine? The Atonement in Revelation as an Example

In my opinion, the position that *antilegomena* should not be used to teach Christian doctrine, where it is still held in our Lutheran circles, should be abandoned.[37] If this biblical book is read in worship and preached from pulpits, as it has been for almost two millennia in the Western church, then it is already being used to teach doctrine, even if not in every dogmatics text. Although false teaching such as premillennialism has been drawn from Revelation 20, a portion of Scripture that is difficult to interpret does not mean that we should jettison the book. To illustrate, it may be helpful to examine how Revelation teaches a rather significant teaching of Christianity: the atonement.

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[35] For more extensive discussions of the christological identification of these figures in Revelation, see Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 245–269, and Gieschen, "The Lamb (Not the Man) on the Divine Throne," 221–243.

[36] For further discussion, see Charles A. Gieschen, "Sacramental Theology in the Book of Revelation," *CTQ* 67 (2003): 149–174.

[37] For this position among some Lutheran dogmaticians, see Preus, "The New Testament Canon," 135–146.

Anselmic Atonement Imagery and Language

The Anselmic understanding of the atonement—so prominent in Lutheran teaching and preaching—which holds that the death of Jesus paid the entire debt of humanity's sin, is clearly taught in Revelation. Even before the first vision begins, John declares that Jesus is "the firstborn from the dead" and the one "who loved us and has *loosed us from our sins by his blood* (λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ) and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father" (Rev 1:5–6). If one stopped here before hearing/reading the opening vision, he would already have a theologically rich and vivid testimony to the atonement through the mention of the shedding of the blood of the incarnate son ("his blood") as payment for sin that results in forgiveness ("loosed us from our sins") as well as the privileged status of reigning ("a kingdom") and serving ("priests") with Christ.

As already noted, the most prominent and powerful scene of Revelation is chapter 5. There the Anselmic atonement theology is seen in the slaughtered Lamb and then heard in the hymn sung to the Lamb: "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for *you were slaughtered* (ἐσφάγης) and *by your blood you redeemed people for God* (ἠγόρασας τῷ θεῷ ἐν τῷ αἵματί σου) from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (Rev 5:9–10). Here is the language of atonement. In the sacrificial blood he poured out in his crucifixion, the "slaughtered" Lamb has purchased the various peoples who now make up the new Israel. From this inclusive imagery, one could even argue that universal substitutionary atonement is taught here, because individuals of every tribe, language, people, and nation could not be part of the new Israel unless all have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb. This language of purchasing through blood is also behind the redemption language used of the 144,000 later in Revelation: "No one could learn that song except the 144,000, *the redeemed ones* [οἱ ἠγορασμένοι] from the earth" (Rev 14:3) and "*These have been redeemed* [οὗτοι ἠγοράσθησαν] from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb" (Rev 14:4).

More blood and more teaching of Anselmic atonement theology is found in Revelation 7. The great multitude that no one can number is crying, "Salvation belongs to our God, namely the one who sits on the throne and the Lamb!" These coming out of the great tribulation then specify that this salvation is based upon the reality that "*they washed their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb* [ἔπλυναν τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐλεύκαναν αὐτὰς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ ἀρνίου]" (Rev 7:14). This theme arises again in the concluding chapter: "Blessed are *those who wash their robes* [οἱ πλύνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν] so that they may have the right to the tree of life and they may enter the city by the gates" (Rev 22:14). The basis for the purely white resurrected glory of these saints is the blood that the Lamb shed in his crucifixion that has purified these sinners from all sin.[38] The source of the martyrs' victory over Satan is not their personal might, but the blood of the Lamb: "And *they conquered* [αὐτοὶ ἐνίκησαν] *him by the blood of the Lamb* and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death" (Rev 12:11). As this evidence demonstrates, there is abundant and beautiful testimony to Anselmic atonement theology.

Christus Victor *Atonement Imagery and Language*

In any of the post-Easter appearances of Jesus, one would expect much *Christus victor* testimony and imagery, and there is this in Revelation, beginning with his glorious appearance to John on Patmos (Rev 1:12–16) and the first words out of his mouth: "Stop fearing, I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, but I am living forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades" (Rev 1:17b–18).[39] Christ is here the one who has conquered death and the realm of the dead through his own death and resurrection, a theme that is apparent in each of the promises about conquering made at the end of each letter to the seven churches (Rev 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26–28; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21). The announcement that Christ has "the key of David" that opens the door to heaven (Rev 3:7) is an image of victory similar to his proclamation that he has the keys of Death and Hades.[40]

The Lamb's victory over death and sin is also featured in the central vision of Revelation—namely, the throne room scene of chapter 5. He is said to be worthy to open the scroll, an image that shows him to be in charge of history: "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals (Rev 5:5). This slaughtered little lamb is "standing" in the midst of the divine throne, a posture of resurrection victory. His victory makes him the object of worship for all those on earth and in heaven, as

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[38] For a discussion of the language of "robes" representing resurrected glory in Revelation, see Gieschen, "Sacramental Theology in the Book of Revelation," 159.

[39] For the background of this appearance of Christ in the Old Testament appearances of YHWH, see Gieschen, "The Lamb (Not the Man) on the Divine Throne," 232–235.

[40] See the fuller discussion of this text in Gieschen, "Sacramental Theology in the Book of Revelation," 162–167.

John writes, "Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!'" (Rev 5:12). This is an ultimate expression of the *Christus victor* theme, not only in Revelation, but within the whole New Testament canon.

Christ's victory over Satan is especially prominent in the scene about the war in heaven found in Revelation 12: "Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown with him" (Rev 12:7–9). This action in heaven is the resulting effect of the Lamb's victory on earth through the shedding of his blood.[41]

The theme of victory is also signaled by the title given to Christ in Revelation: "Lord of lords and King of kings." It is first heard in the vision of the Harlot, who is also Babylon: "They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful" (Rev 17:14). Even more vivid is this King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16) depicted as the conquering warrior on the white horse who "treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty" (Rev 19:15), throwing the beast and false prophet into the lake of fire and single-handedly slaying with the sword of his mouth all who make war against him (Rev 19:19–21).

The theme of Christ's reign introduced in Revelation 5 is sounded again in Revelation 11: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever" (Rev 11:15). This reign of Christ comes to a climax in the marriage supper of the Lamb found in Revelation 19: "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come" (Rev 19:6). This Hallelujah proclamation of God's reign through Christ's victory is the textual basis for sublime musical compositions such as "The Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's *The Messiah*. Yes, this *Christus victor* atonement theology in Revelation has

[41] See also Charles A. Gieschen, "The Identity of Michael in Revelation 12: Created Angel or the Son of God?," *CTQ* 74 (2010): 139–143.

continued to be the Holy Spirit's voice to point many Christians to Christ's victory and eternal reign forever and ever.

Exemplary Atonement Imagery and Language

Finally, the exemplary understanding of atonement is also found in Revelation. The most prominent example of this is Jesus being repeatedly proclaimed to be "the witness (ὁ μάρτυς)" (Rev 1:5; 3:14; cf. 19:11) and one who gave "witness" (μαρτυρία) through his teaching and life (Rev 1:2; 1:9; 19:10 [twice]). In Revelation, "the witness of Jesus" is paired and on par with "the word of God" several times (Rev 1:2; 1:9; 20:4; cf. 12:11). These texts are stark evidence, within a few decades of Jesus' own ministry, of the respect that early Christians gave to the witness of Jesus' teaching and life.

In the book of Revelation, the faithful and true witness of Jesus unto death becomes an example or exemplar for the lives of his followers who are also to be faithful and true witnesses. For example, Revelation tells of other "witnesses" who were put to death, such as Antipas from the church in Pergamum (Rev 2:13) and "the ones killed on account of their witness" whom John sees under the altar calling for judgment (Rev 6:9). The two witnesses of Revelation 11:1–13, who symbolize the prophetic office of the Holy Ministry in the church, are put to death but rise again to bear witness. The whore of Babylon is described as one who is "drunk with the blood . . . of those who bore witness to Jesus" (Rev 17:6). Towards the end of this visionary experience, John sees "the souls of those beheaded on account of their witness for Jesus" (Rev 20:4). Certainly, Revelation tells of these "witnesses" following Jesus' example even to death. It is this stress on Jesus as our exemplar as a faithful witness that led Revelation to be an important book for inspiring martyrdom and for those whose witness led to execution.

It is noteworthy, however, that the various occurrences of "witness" language in Revelation do not primarily describe the witness that Christians gave as they were put to death, but the witness given during their lives on earth. Faithful Christians who testified to Jesus with their lips and lives and then died of sickness or old age, rather than being killed on account of their confession, are also known as witnesses. Simply put, a martyr or witness in the Book of Revelation is one who gives "witness" or "witnesses" to Jesus (Rev 1:2; 12:17; 19:10), bearing witness to Jesus as God incarnate and to what he has done by "freeing us from our sins by his blood" (Rev 1:5). Against all forms of idolatry that surround and tempt Christians, the Book of Revelation sets before the hearer of this vision the most powerful witness that Christians can give to the world: gathering together on earth with the saints of heaven to worship the one true God who alone is worthy to be worshiped. As Richard Bauckham states, "Worship, which is so prominent in the theocentric vision of Revelation, has nothing to do with pietistic retreat from the public world. It is the source of resistance to the idolatries of the public world."[42] In the face of such idolatries, Jesus' witness becomes our exemplar, whether our witness leads to death or not.

Use of Revelation for Christian Doctrine

Should this book be used to teach doctrine? While there have been those who have questioned Revelation as the authoritative word of God, it is clear that the seer and author John was not one of them. Otherwise, he would have never concluded the book with this dire warning: "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away for the words of the book of his prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book" (Rev 22:18–19). Many in the early church obviously had the same conviction, and with good reason due to its apostolic teaching. Contrary to Luther's early assessment, what has been made very apparent through the evidence presented here is this: Christ is clearly and purely taught and known in this book.[43]

V. Conclusion

The study of the *homolegoumena-antilegomena* distinction is an important part of understanding the history of the New Testament canon and is especially important for understanding a priority within the New Testament canon beginning with the Gospels, Acts, the Pauline Epistles, 1 John, and 1 Peter. This presentation, however, has argued that use of the *homolegoumena-antilegomena* distinction in a manner that marginalizes or dismisses the significance of the *antilegomena* within the traditional twenty-seven books of the New Testament canon for Christian faith and life is unhelpful and counterproductive in our twenty-first century context. It is fuel for the fire of those who seek to erode our understanding of canon by removing or adding documents. J. A. O. Preus, former president of Concordia Theological Seminary as well as the LCMS, states the following in the

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[42] Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 161.

[43] See Luther's assessment, quoted above, including his conclusion, "Christ is neither taught nor known in it" (the referent of "it" here is the Book of Revelation).

closing line of his article on the canon: "We need have more of the dogmaticians' reverence for scripture as the God-breathed, authoritative word, which we recognize on the basis of its authorship, human and divine, its content, and the history of its use through the ages of the church."[44] The *antilegomena* label should not lead us to avoid these books in the canon, but it should focus us on the content of these writings that indeed has shown itself over the centuries to be of the apostles' teaching and the same Holy Spirit. The primary goal of this study is renewed appreciation for, and study of, the *whole* canon, both New and Old Testaments, especially by pastors, so that the apostolic ministers and the church remain truly grounded in all the teaching revealed there. This, after all, is what pastors promise to do in their ordination vows, at least in the LCMS.

It has been also been argued that the most important criterion for canonicity is apostolic teaching, because the most important period for the canon was neither the third or fourth century, nor the sixteenth century. The most important period for the New Testament canon was the two decades after the death and resurrection of Christ when the significance of that event was being preached and taught orally as the Holy Spirit bore witness through the apostolic ministers: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ Jesus died on behalf of sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3–4). The *regula fidei,* the rule of faith, took shape during this oral period, long before it was expressed more publicly in the second century. The next most important period for the canon was between AD 50 and 70, when most of the New Testament documents were written. It was the oral apostolic proclamation and teaching already in place and the eyewitnesses still living that confirmed the authority of these documents now found in the New Testament.[45] And the next most important period was between AD 70 and 150 when these documents began to be read, proclaimed, and studied in the earliest Christian churches as the word of the Lord grew and multiplied throughout the ancient world. By the time the early canonical lists appeared in the late second through the fourth centuries, the church had

[44] Preus, *The New Testament Canon*, 151.

[45] It is the thesis of Samuel Byrskog that the Gospels were written within the generation of the events in them specifically because the authors wanted the historical testimony in their Gospels to be confirmed by witnesses still living. See Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History—History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History,* Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

already clearly recognized the vast majority of the canonical writings that were authoritative Scripture through their widespread use of them, even the *antilegomena*. If they had not, then the *antilegomena* would not have been disputed; they would have been rendered not genuine.

Concerning the importance of apostolicity in discussions of authority and canon, the following conclusion of an opinion of the Department of Systematic Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary contains practical guidance for how pastors can address this matter in a congregation setting:

> After the times of the apostles, Christians became acquainted with a completed canon rather than with individual, separate writings. The authority of each New Testament writing does *not* derive from its being in the canon, but it derives from its apostolic authority which is corroborated by the apostolic content of its message. Christians will recognize that all New Testament books share in the same apostolic message. The canon reflects a unified apostolic origin and content. The distinction between the homologoumena and antilegomena should not ordinarily be discussed among laity, as it is chiefly an historical issue. The distinction however is not destructive of the Christian faith or message, and it can be approached candidly. The distinction however does not mean that the Christian has unrestricted license to discard New Testament books. The person rejecting certain New Testament books because the apostolic authorship is doubted should be able to demonstrate his arguments in this matter. The selection of New Testament writings does not belong to Christian liberty.[46]

Even though some questions surrounding the authorship and origins of some documents of the canon will probably always remained unanswered, the church is not in a situation of doubt and uncertainty about what God has revealed. J. A. O. Preus reminds us that just as the church recognized the apostolic Scriptures long before the 39th Paschal letter of Anthansius in AD 367 or the decree of the Third Council of Carthage in AD 397, so also these Scriptures of the New Testament continue to show themselves to be the word of God through our use of them for faith and life in Christ:

> Are we then in a state of darkness and confusion which makes us as theologians so unsure of our moorings that we are not quite sure whether God might also have revealed himself to the pious of antiquity or to the contemplative among the Hindus and the virtuous among the Moslems? Much of modern theology today has arrived at

[46] "Opinion of the Department of Systematic Theology: Apostolicity, Inspiration, and Canonicity," *CTQ* 44 (1980): 49.

> this point, largely because men have given up scripture as the authoritative and inerrant word of God. Again our dogmaticians supply us with an answer. Scripture is *autopistos.* It is its own authority, needing neither the decrees of councils and popes, not the scientifically documented witness of the history, nor even the absolute proof regarding specific apostolic authorship to establish its authority and value. The same scriptures which convinced the early Christians that they were truly God-breathed books convince us of the same, if we approach them with the attitude which Christ requires of all those who will worship him and be his disciples. Perhaps the Lord in his wisdom has dealt with the canon in the same way as he did with the text. There is confusion, uncertainty, and a host of unanswered questions; yet the scripture continues to accomplish its mighty acts among men. There is a peculiar combination of faith and history involved in the study of the canon. We can be scientific and scholarly up to a point, but at that point faith must take over. Where faith is lacking, not only the canon falls, but so does the Bible and ultimately the Christ to whom the scripture testifies.[47]

All twenty-seven documents that have come to be known as the New Testament continue to show themselves to be authoritative witnesses to Christ, including the *antilegomena*. May we make use of them all in our witness to Christ in each passing century, including this one.

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[47] Preus, "The New Testament Canon," 149–150.

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Taking War Captive: A Recommendation of Daniel Bell's *Just War as Christian Discipleship*

Joel P. Meyer

Teaching about just war often lies on the periphery of Christian theology. Far from the orbit of such central loci as the Trinity, Christology, and justification, just war often has a place tucked away in the study of ethics. This has not always been the case. In his seminal essay, "How 'Christian Ethics' Came to Be," Stanley Hauerwas points out that the gap between theology and ethics is a recent phenomenon.[1] From the early church fathers to Luther, questions about how to live could not be separated from convictions about God's work in Jesus. Issues of morality were encompassed within the divine economy. With the dawning of modernity, though, questions about how to live were removed from the life and theology of the church. Hauerwas explains:

> [M]odern people think of themselves as haunted by the problem of relativism. If our "ethics" are relative to time and place, what if anything prevents our moral opinions from being "conventional"? And if they are conventional, some assume they must also be "arbitrary." But if our morality is conventional, how can we ever expect to secure agreements between people who disagree?[2]

Therefore, in the interest of creating a unified culture, modernity tried to ground moral convictions in something more rational and universal than Christianity. Ethics developed as a form of reflection on human life that was sharply distinguished from core Christian convictions about God.

On issues of war and violence, Lutherans have done little to overcome modernity's divide. In fact, Lutherans have a confessional commitment to just war. Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession states that "Christians are permitted to hold civil office, to work in law courts, to decide matters by imperial and other existing laws, to impose just punishments, to wage

[1] Stanley Hauerwas, "How 'Christian Ethics' Came to Be," in *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 37–49.

[2] Hauerwas, "Christian Ethics," 44.

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just war, to serve as soldiers," and that "Christians owe obedience to their magistrates and laws except when commanded to sin. For then they owe greater obedience to God than to human beings (Acts 5[:29])" (AC XVI 2, 6–7). Nevertheless, as Reinhard Hütter has made clear, this confessional commitment has rarely been in working order.[3] Lutherans have not defined what counts as a just war, nor have they consistently taught the tradition. Even more significantly, though, Lutherans have often eclipsed just war teaching with the emphasis that the state is one of the orders of creation and that war is a legitimate practice of the state. As a result, Lutherans are not adept at using their theological convictions to understand contemporary matters of war and violence. In other words, Lutherans have lost the theological resources to judge when we owe due obedience to civil authorities and when we must obey God rather than human beings.

Recently Daniel M. Bell Jr., Professor of Theological Ethics at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, has addressed this gap in an impressive and challenging way with the publication of *Just War as Christian Discipleship*.[4] To be sure, his is an unassuming volume. The book introduces the tradition of just war to laity and pastors alike. To that end, Bell writes with clarity and simplicity, almost to a fault. He refrains from engaging the scholarly debates and has minimal discussion of current events. While these qualities would make Bell's book seem uninteresting to the average Lutheran pastor or theologian, the burden of this study's argument will be to demonstrate why Bell's book is essential reading for American Lutherans.

By placing the book within the context of recent and relevant literature on Christianity and American politics, this study will argue that Bell's book addresses a significant challenge posed by American culture to the Lutheran teaching on two-kingdom theology. Lutherans confess that vocations of the sword are God-pleasing, because God uses them to preserve life and society until the return of Christ. American politics, however, configures these vocations so that core Christian convictions become marginalized as merely private values that function in strictly therapeutic and individualistic ways. In matters of war and violence, American politics have out-narrated the Christian faith. The goal of this study will be to

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[3] Reinhard Hütter, "Be Honest in Just War Thinking! Lutherans, the Just War Tradition, and Selective Conscientious Objection," in *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas, et al. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 69–83.

[4] Daniel M. Bell Jr., *Just War as Christian Discipleship: Recentering the Tradition in the Church Rather Than the State* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009).

show that by grounding just war in the Christian narrative and the practice of the church Bell's book gives Christians the resources to recapture the narratives that describe war.

I. Just War as Christian Discipleship

The most unique aspect of Bell's book is the way that it describes just war as a form of Christian discipleship. In many discussions of just war, the traditional criteria (such as legitimate authority, just cause, right intent, and last resort) are described as a checklist and guideline for state policy makers.[5] Bell, however, takes just war out of the realm of foreign policy strategists and places it in the ordinary practices of the Christian life. According to Bell, the criteria of just war signify ways that the ordinary love and justice that Christians have for their neighbors extend into the field of international conflict. Just war, in that sense, is simply Christian discipleship.

An important question for Bell in this regard is whether Christians consider just war to be a lesser evil or a positive good. When considered a lesser evil, just war is thought to be a concession to the reality that Christians have the responsibility to rule. Ordinarily, Christians would be nonviolent followers of Jesus, but since they also have a responsibility to run the world, they must put aside their commitment to Jesus and operate by another standard of judgment. Since they find themselves in vocations of statehood, they must get their hands dirty and sin boldly. Although Bell does not mention him explicitly, Reinhold Niebuhr has certainly been the most prominent theologian to give this sort of account of Christian participation in war. For instance, in his essay, "Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist," Niebuhr argues that since every human endeavor is contaminated with sin, human beings will never be able to achieve perfection.[6] At best, we can only recognize the limits of any attempt to bring about an ultimate and absolute justice and act responsibly within those constraints.

Bell, though, argues that "lesser evil" accounts of just war undermine the criteria that would limit war in the first place. For instance, "one could

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[5] See Oliver O'Donovan, *The Just War Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Like Bell, O'Donovan holds that Just War is an extension of ordinary Christian forms of judgment into the field of war. Unlike Bell, however, O'Donovan's book addresses those who are in position to influence state policy.

[6] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist," in *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses*, ed. Robert McAfee Brown (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 102–119.

argue that the just war tradition itself represents an impossible ideal that at any given moment must be discarded for the sake of warding off a greater evil."[7] Therefore, a fundamental break with the Christian tradition occurs when just war is construed as a lesser evil. No longer are just warriors obligated to follow Jesus when assessing and participating in a war; instead, Christian convictions about God become eclipsed by concerns of effectiveness.

To the contrary, Bell argues that Christians should understand just war as a positive good. Building on the work of Augustine, Bell describes just war as a means of following Jesus' command to love our neighbors. According to Augustine, an individual Christian is not to kill another person even in self-defense. Out of love for the neighbor it is better to be killed than to kill. But this does not mean that Christians cannot serve in the military. War can be an act of love for the neighbor insofar as it serves as a harsh kindness that aims to restore peace and justice. The just war tradition, therefore, provides the criteria for ensuring that a war serves as a form of love for the enemy. In that sense just war is "rightly understood not as a departure from the moral vision of Jesus and the early church but as an extension of that vision in different times and under changed circumstances."[8] The benefit of this understanding is that Christian convictions about God are put to use in thinking about and acting in war rather than laid aside as irrelevant and ineffective.

Moreover, when placed within the context of Christian discipleship, the criteria for just war find their ground in the triune God's economy of salvation rather than the narrative of the modern nation-state. Bell identifies two different accounts of just war. He calls them "Just War as Public Policy Checklist" (JWPPC) and "Just War as Christian Discipleship" (JWCD). JWPPC places just war within the narrative of the modern nation-state, while JWCD places just war within the triune economy. Each account describes the criteria differently according to a different underlying rationale. For instance, both JWPPC and JWCD hold that only a legitimate authority may wage war. Moreover, both agree that the modern state is the legitimate authority, but they each account for the authority of the state in their own way. The JWPPC tradition argues that states have the authority to wage war because they are sovereign over a territory of people who have the natural right of self-preservation. On the other hand, the JWCD tradition has a theological rationale for the state's authority: only God has

[7] Bell, *Just War*, 34.

[8] Bell, *Just War*, 33.

the right to kill, and God has given that right to the government in order to keep civic peace.

While the differences might seem subtle, they have significant consequences that impact the rest of the criteria. For instance, JWPPC tends to limit just cause to matters of self-defense, since nation-states have sovereignty over a territory in order to maintain the right of self-preservation. This also means that JWPPC has minimal use for the concept of right intent (the criteria that governs the motives of the would-be just warrior), since the justice sought in war is primarily a justice concerned with the rights of the people within the sovereign's territory. On the other hand, JWCD understands just cause in a more robust sense, namely as the restoration of the common good—that is, not only the good of the people within our territory but also the good of allies and enemies alike. Therefore, JWCD places greater emphasis on right intent. If the intent of war is not to restore the common good for all parties involved, then other avenues should be sought besides war.

Finally, when they are grounded in the Christian narrative about God, the criteria serve as more than a checklist for public policy makers. They function as nodes of Christian moral formation. Bell does not cease to remind the reader that the justice and love that we seek cannot be summoned spontaneously in war. Rather, if we are to be a just war people, we must be trained in the everyday habits of seeking justice and loving our neighbor. Therefore, the disciplines necessary to be just warriors flow naturally from the everyday habits of the church's life. It follows that the challenge of just war is not primarily a challenge for the Pentagon or the United States military; it is first and foremost a challenge for the church. And at the end of every chapter, Bell identifies a number of challenges that the church will need to consider if it is to form a people who have such an understanding of just war.

Bell's challenges are remarkably ordinary in character, which makes them deeply penetrating. For instance, a challenge for the church concerning right intent is whether or not churches foster love for enemies. Bell asks,

> Do we regularly pray for our enemies in both private and corporate prayer, or do we pray only for our side and our own? We might ask if apart from war we can even name our enemies. Or have we succumbed to a culture of niceness that shies away from doing so because it is considered impolite? If we find it difficult even to acknowledge forthrightly the presence of enemies, we will be hard pressed to love them on those occasions when we cannot avoid facing them. Likewise

> . . . we might ask ourselves if in the midst of a highly charged, ideologically polarized culture the church encourages and models in its own life ways of dealing with conflict that manifest the love of enemies. Or do we simply avoid the difficult task of loving enemies by separating from those with whom we disagree? . . . Alternatively, do we avoid loving our enemies by repressing conflict altogether or by clinging to a sentimentality that refuses to accept that sometimes love must be tough, benevolence severe, kindness harsh?[9]

Bell's commentary in these sections provokes honest reflection on our most common and ordinary practices, and such reflection on our practices can be considered the most illuminating and significant contribution of his book. For instance, when we take Bell's challenges to heart, we should notice that many churches pray for the United States military, but few, if any, pray for Al-Qaida or ISIS. Such habits of prayer reveal the simple but profound importance of Bell's argument. At a basic level, the Christian narrative does not always form our practice of Christianity.

II. The Constantinian Synthesis

How has this happened? Again, take for example our common habits of prayer. That many churches in the United States pray for the American military but not for Al-Qaida raises an important question: What are the determinative commitments of American Christians if we pray at church for the military but rarely, if ever, think to pray for people who want to kill us? John Howard Yoder's account of Constantinianism begins to answer that question and to place Bell's book within a larger context.[10]

Yoder uses the term Constantinianism to mark the shift that took place when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. Official cooperation between Constantine and the bishops created a new social and political arrangement that redefined what it meant to be a Christian. Before the Constantinian era, identifying oneself as a Christian required "at least a degree of conviction," but after the synthesis, "the church was everybody," and "it would take exceptional conviction not to be counted as Christian."[11]

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[9] Bell, *Just War*, 176.

[10] "Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics" is a chapter in John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

[11] Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 136.

According to Yoder, this new political and social context generated developments in Christian thought and practice. The most important development was a transformed understanding of eschatology. Prior to the synthesis, the lordship of Christ was understood in terms similar to the victory of D-Day in World War Two, when the Allies successfully invaded the mainland of Europe. At that point, the fate of the war was determined. But the final victory was still yet to come. Yoder suggests that "this corresponds to the age of the church. Evil is potentially subdued, and its submission is already a reality in the reign of Christ, but the final triumph of God is yet to come."[12] Therefore, while the church was God's primary agent in bringing about the consummation of history, the secular state played a supporting role in so far as it was the emergency measure that God used to keep order in the meantime. But after the synthesis, this eschatological perspective of the state was transformed. Now that a particular state was the bearer of Christianity, the success of Christianity depended on the success of that particular state. Thus, the state rather than the church became the true bearer of history.

Consequently, when a particular state became the agent by which God would bring about the consummation of history—when a particular political entity became the bearer of Christianity to the world—the survival of that particular state became an end in itself. Prior to Constantine, the eschatological victory of Christ defined the boundaries of any state. Political authorities were not an end in themselves but only an emergency measure to restrain evil and keep good order. Now, however, "the state, blessed by the church, becomes plaintiff, judge, jury, and executioner; and the rightness of the cause justifies any methods, even the suppression or extermination of the enemy."[13]

Likewise, Christian ethics, which were previously defined in terms of discipleship to Jesus, now became preoccupied with how to preserve this particular society and its government. For instance, Yoder suggests that in this environment two questions came to determine and limit Christian ethics: Can you ask such behavior of everyone? And, what would happen if everyone did it? These questions are used to exclude Jesus' call to discipleship as irresponsible and unrealistic to the task of managing

[12] John Howard Yoder, *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 60.

[13] Yoder, *Original Revolution*, 67.

society.[14] In this approach, the survival and the promotion of the state thus become the central goal of the church.[15]

III. Migrations of the Holy

One might reasonably ask what any of this has to do with our American context. After all, the separation of church and state was intended to ensure that the state does not use its political power and persuasion to evangelize. Yoder, however, argues that the basic "structural error" of identifying a particular state "as a bearer of God's cause" has endured throughout the history of the West, although it has been "transposed into a new key."[16] William Cavanaugh's book, *The Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church*, shows how the Constantinian synthesis has endured to this day. [17] Cavanaugh writes his book as a contribution to the debate about secularization. While most scholars agree that religion has declined in the West, Cavanaugh argues that it never went away. Instead, the commitments and hopes that were traditionally associated with the church have migrated to the modern nation-state. Because the nation-state claims to be the keeper of the common good, our imaginations are trained to look to the state for all good in life. In turn, the nation-state demands our total loyalty and works to subordinate all other attachments to itself.

For example, Cavanaugh unmasks the subtle idolatry of the nation-state by carefully deconstructing the idea that the state is the keeper of the common good.[18] Political theorists—including well-intentioned Christians—argue that the state is the keeper of the common good because it sits atop a social pyramid. At the base of the pyramid lies the family. Moving upward one finds intermediary social groups and associations like the church. And at the top one finds the state, which is supposed to protect and ensure the survival of these more basic social institutions. Cavanaugh argues that this understanding of the state has little basis in history or common experience. Instead, the modern nation-state develops its power and authority by undermining the significance of intermediary associ-

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[14] Yoder, "Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics," 139.

[15] Yoder, *Original Revolution*, 146–153.

[16] Yoder, "Constantinian Sources," 141–144. See also Yoder, *Original Revolution*, 146–153.

[17] William T. Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

[18] Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy*, 1–6.

ations like the church. Sociologists Robert Bellah and Robert Putnam have long noticed that these groups no longer function to provide identity and meaning for Western people. Cavanaugh argues that the nation-state has used the ideology of individual rights to disconnect us from these intermediate associations and to create a more direct and unmediated relationship between the individual and the state. Put simply, our identities are determined by the abstract notion of individual rights, and these rights are protected and guaranteed by the nation-state. Cavanaugh concludes that the nation-state has monopolized the commitments, loyalties, and imaginations of Western people.

Furthermore, in a chapter entitled "Messianic Nation: A Christian Critique of American Exceptionalism," Cavanaugh shows how thoroughly the nation-state has captured the imagination of some American Christians. American exceptionalism—the idea that America has a unique role in making history turn out right—has both a theological and secular strain. The theological strain posits a direct relationship between God and America. America is God's chosen and elect nation—either to enforce and promulgate Christianity (Puritans) or to spread freedom from tyranny. The secular version does not refer to God's election. In this understanding, what makes America exceptional is that its citizens have the freedom to worship whatever God they want. In this case, "Freedom is not a substantive good but a formal structure that maximizes the possibility of each person to realize his or her particular goods. What America has discovered, therefore, is not particular to America, but is the key to happiness and peace for the whole world."[19] Christian theologian Stephen Webb even combines the two by arguing that America is God's chosen nation because its freedoms provide the best opportunity for people to choose Christianity. Cavanaugh, like Yoder before him, argues against this theological embrace of American exceptionalism: "What has happened in effect is that America has become the new church. When the relationship of America and God is this direct, there is little to check the identification of God's will with America's."[20]

Cavanaugh's arguments demonstrate what Yoder means when he says that the basic structural error of Constantinianism has been transposed into a new key. Despite the separation of church and state, citizens of modern nation-states (and especially the United States of America) often look to the state for all good in this life, including the security to worship

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[19] Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy*, 93.

[20] Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy*, 104.

whatever God we want. Cavanaugh tries to change the subject of the debate about the decline of religion from secularization to "the age-old sin of idolatry."[21] If Luther's description of idolatry in the Large Catechism is correct, Cavanaugh succeeds at his goal.

IV. The Two Kingdoms in the Modern Context

Ironically, the doctrine of the two kingdoms can open Lutherans to the possibility of this idolatry. I say ironically, because the Lutheran two-kingdom doctrine should describe secular authority in terms that eliminate the sacred status of any particular state. For instance, in his treatise "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," Luther describes the state within God's economy of salvation centered in Christ.[22] God rules his creation primarily through the proclamation of the gospel about his Son, which creates faith active in love. Because the fullness of the kingdom of God in Jesus is still yet to come, however, God has ordained civil governments with the authority to use the sword in order to restrain evil and maintain good order. In the meantime, Christians are called to fulfill vocations of civil authority, because these are opportunities to love and serve our neighbor. In this basic account of the economy of salvation, secular authorities are rendered "temporal" in the sense that no one particular state carries the burden of salvation. As Robert Benne puts it, in light of the kingdom of Christ, all human efforts "deal with penultimate improvements in the human condition, with relative goods and bads, not with salvation. This means that politics is desacralized and relativized. Salvation is through Christ, not through human political schemes nor through psychological or religious efforts."[23]

While the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms has this positive feature, it can also open a space for its co-option by temporal authorities. To recognize the ultimate limits of the state is one matter; to give positive substance as to how we should fulfill the vocations of temporal authority is another. For that purpose, Lutherans usually argue that all human beings share a capacity for common moral reasoning. Again, according to Benne, "this moral reason is finally a reflection of the Law 'written on the heart'

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[21] Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy*, 2.

[22] Martin Luther, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," in *Luther's Works*, trans. J. J. Schindel, ed. Walther I. Brandt, vol. 45 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 81–129.

[23] Robert Benne, *Reasonable Ethics: A Christian Approach to Social, Economic, and Political Concerns* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 93.

(Rom. 2:15) that God has placed in every human soul. Thus non-Christians also have God-given capacities to discern the moral ordering of our common life."[24]

This account of human reasoning has several problems. Most troublesome is that such claims about the ability of human reason render innocuous the strong theological convictions that underlie the two-kingdom doctrine. The temporal nature of human government is not common sense. Christians derive it from our conviction that God is ruling this world first and foremost through the proclamation of the gospel. In other words, our belief that the state is not a means of human salvation depends on our belief that the God of Israel raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead and made him Lord and Christ. But when Christians debate in the left-hand realm of God's reign with no more substantive convictions than the Decalogue (or whatever counts as the law written on the heart), then we effectively lay aside the theological resources we possess that would desacralize the state.

Put another way, Christians today face a struggle between competing master narratives. If we do not bring the entire Christian narrative to the table—including our more particular convictions about God—we will find that even our best moral reasoning will be fit into another story altogether.

V. The Myth of Religious Violence

Even while the doctrine of the two kingdoms intends to make any given government relative to God's work through Christ, it can simultaneously create the space for governments to control the master narrative. William Cavanaugh argues in his book *The Myth of Religious Violence* that the modern liberal nation-state achieves just such control over Christianity by perpetuating the myth that religion is inherently prone to violence.[25] The idea that religion is a transhistorical and transcultural feature of human life that is especially prone to violence, and that the secular state is a necessary development to stave off religious conflict, has achieved mythical status in the West. It functions as a myth because it has captured our collective imaginations without much argument. Upon closer inspection, Cavanaugh unveils not only its incoherence, but the way it functions to undermine the unquestioned authority of modern nation-states.

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[24] Benne, *Reasonable Ethics*, 60–61.

[25] William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). The discussion that follows draws on this book.

Cavanaugh argues that attempts to separate a distinct sphere of "religion," which is prone to violence because it is either absolutist, divisive, or irrational, from a sphere of "the secular" inevitably fail. When those who espouse the myth try to define what counts as religion, they cannot help but also describe features that apply to "secular" realities as well. For instance, those who suggest that religion is prone to violence because it is absolutist have a hard time explaining why the term religion does not also apply to sentiments of nationalism. Cavanaugh does not simply wish to argue that secular realities are just as violent as religious realities. Rather, he identifies these inconsistencies in order to illuminate and disestablish the arrangements of power that would distinguish between some forms of violence as "religious" and "irrational" from other forms of violence as "secular" and "rational." He finds that the Western societies perpetuate the myth of religious violence as justification for the violence of the modern Western nation-state.

Thus, the promulgation of this myth has accomplished two feats at once. It has banned religious convictions from public influence while at the same time secured the absolute authority of the state on issues of violence and war. Cavanaugh argues that "this myth can be and is used in domestic politics to legitimate the marginalization of certain types of practices and groups labeled religious, while underwriting the nation-state's monopoly on its citizens' willingness to sacrifice and kill."[26]

If Cavanaugh is right, the myth ensures that American Christians will consider their convictions about God insignificant (and possibly even dangerous) in regard to foreign affairs. At the same time, the myth deifies the modern liberal nation-state as the only entity that can ensure peace. Therefore, the danger is not only that Christians will act unethically in times of war. Rather, the danger is also that their thoughts and actions with regard to war perpetuate a subtle idolatry. This situation is exactly what makes Bell's book significant. By arguing for just war as a form of Christian discipleship, Bell gives the church the resources to recapture the master narrative in the imagination of Christians.

VI. Conclusion

By summarizing the arguments of Bell, Yoder, and Cavanaugh, and by placing them alongside brief selections from Luther and Benne, I have not tried to give anything close to a comprehensive account of religion and politics in America, the Constantinian synthesis, religion and violence,

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[26] Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 4.

American war, the Lutheran two-kingdom doctrine, or contemporary Lutheran public theology. I have only tried to make the connections between recent and relevant literature on these topics with the hope of illuminating the conversation into which Bell's book fits. At the most, I have argued that the Constantinian synthesis described by John Howard Yoder continues in contemporary America through the conviction that America is an exceptional nation. What makes it exceptional, in the minds of many, is the same thing that renders Christian convictions about God individualistic and strictly therapeutic—namely that religion is not only kept out of matters of public policy, but that it also ceases to grant Americans identity and purpose. Bell's book can give churches the resources to reverse this decay by showing how common Christian convictions might shape our public lives in quite ordinary, and yet profoundly forgotten, ways.

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Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: The Triumph of Culture?

Gifford A. Grobien

Barna's extensive 2007 survey investigating marriage indicates that about one-third of Americans who have married (78% of the total population) have also divorced at least once.[1] This survey became the object of much discussion, especially because it indicated a lack of significant variation between the rate of divorce among non-Christians and the rate among "born-again" Christians. However, Barna's definition of "born-again" may be misleading. As the survey report indicates, the category "born-again" means that a person self-identifies as such and has made a commitment to Jesus Christ. Barna does not categorize people according to church attendance or practices of piety. When church attendance or religious practices are considered, other studies suggest that practicing Christians tend to have lower divorce rates.[2] How much lower? For Barna's most religious type, "evangelicals," of those who marry, 26% divorce. How much relief this report offers, I suppose, depends on whether we are viewing it from a relative or absolute perspective. A 26% divorce rate is better than one-third, but this still suggests that roughly a quarter of marriages among Christians in America fall apart.

Broadly speaking, faith makes some difference in a person's attitude toward marriage, but not much. In this study, I want to trace the apparent triumph of the American culture's view of marriage even within the church. In so doing, I hope to raise awareness to how the church has let her defenses fall, and to begin to suggest ways that the church might rejuvenate her holy understanding and practice of marriage.

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[1] "New Marriage and Divorce Statistics Released," The Barna Group, March 31, 2008, https://www.barna.org/barna-update/family-kids/42-new-marriage-and-divorce-statistics-released#.VH3NdcnYdkM.

[2] Christine A. Johnson, et. al., *Marriage in Oklahoma: 2001 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce* (Oklahoma State University Bureau for Social Research, 2002), 25–26, www.healthymarriageinfo.org/download.aspx?id=324.

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I. Revisionist Understandings of Marriage

Contemporary conventional wisdom views marriage as a relationship of romantic love, including sexual relations, and of mutual support by which a couple shares the responsibilities and rewards of domestic life.[3] Usually such a relationship assumes exclusivity, although the recent rise in swinger activity suggests this is also weakening. In any case, the high rates of divorce previously quoted suggest that *commitment* is a relative term. Commitment may endure only so long as the couple feels affection for each other or senses compatibility in personality or life goals. Christians may view the level or type of commitment as the difference between contemporary secular marriages and Christian marriages: "Unbelievers aren't committed to each other the way Christians are." More recently, as the conventional understanding of marriage has expanded to include any two people (and now, in some cases, beyond two) regardless of sex, Christians also express the divine definition of God as an important difference: "God defines marriage as between one man and one woman."

Such distinctions are true and important. However, this focus of Christians in the marriage debate camouflages the more fundamental problem among most Christians and churches in America today. While Christians may quibble over the variations of a term or who fits certain categories, they generally agree with this basic definition. If you ask a Christian to define marriage, he will typically answer in a manner similar to the secular, conventional wisdom: a committed, romantic relationship in which people share domestic life. He will probably include the limitation that it be between a man and a woman and probably argue that commitment takes some work and effort and goes beyond feelings of compatibility—that marriage needs a kind of stick-to-it-iveness. The actual relationship, however, between married partners for both secularists and Christians today is essentially the same. This similarity reveals the triumph of secular culture in this area and indicates the fundamental problem in the American church's contemporary ideas about marriage.

This contemporary view of marriage is labeled *revisionist* by Robert George.[4] It is a view that differs significantly from a traditional, biblical view, and even undermines the traditional view. Because of this, when Christians try to tack on elements of biblical marriage, they fail to stick: "Marriage is between only one man and one woman." Okay, but why? Just

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[3] Sherif Girgis, Robert P. George, and Ryan T. Anderson, "What is Marriage?," *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy* 34, no. 1 (2010): 246.

[4] Girgis, George, and Anderson, "What is Marriage?," 246.

because the Bible says so? That's fine for Christians, but meaningless to a secularist. "Commitment should be for life." Again, why is this so, and why do we think it is self-evident? It is not difficult to make at least a pragmatic argument that commitment need last only as long as the relationship seems mutually beneficial, or as long as we receive joy and pleasure from one another, similar to a contract. Rather, to counter the revisionist view of marriage, the church needs to reflect more deeply on the essence of marriage and restore its traditional articulation of marriage as a fundamentally *conjugal* relationship: that is, one oriented around male-female sexual relations and the family (including, under typical circumstances, children) that is established thereby. This conjugal view of marriage is implicitly supported by sociological research. In reviewing the sociological data, we may discover that the triumph of culture is not so thorough.

Family research, broadly speaking, defines itself not only in relation to marriage, but also in relation to the bearing and rearing of children, especially within marriage. Critics may protest that this vestigial orientation toward child-rearing is due to the influence of religion and tradition. However, family research acknowledges that children are produced in domestic romantic relationships and become an important part of domestic life. Children are the acknowledged "most important resources created in marriage," while laws, social expectations, and community processes regarding marriage affect childbearing, even to this day.[5]

As such, families may be defined behaviorally, by coresidence and by childbearing, whether inside or outside of marriage. Formally, coresidence and childbearing, while defining behavioral characteristics of a family, differ from marriage, because marriage is defined, in part, by laws.[6] Seltzer observes the role of laws in defining marriage: "As families formed outside of marriage grow in number, policy makers and individuals try to formalize aspects of nonmarital family relationships, such as when the father of a child born outside of marriage is formally identified as that child's father through the establishment of legal paternity."[7] Clearly the connection between marriage and family has become much looser, and marriage is no longer definitive of family. Yet one cannot help but note that the institutionalization that revisionists hope to accomplish with new laws is accomplished by marriage itself. Marriage has become passé and restrictive, yet it

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[5] Judith A. Seltzer, "Families Formed Outside of Marriage," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62, no. 11 (2000): 1247.

[6] Seltzer, "Families Formed Outside of Marriage," 1247.

[7] Seltzer, "Families Formed Outside of Marriage," 1248.

actually does what is sought by coresidence and childbearing. Even revisionists see this as important.

Yet social expectations and laws have become more tolerant of divorce and of children born out of wedlock, so that marriage is tied less to childbearing and establishing a family. What is more, the permanence of marriage is also declining.[8] In fact, we can see this gradual dissolution of marriage spanning the better part of a century, and this is indicated in two distinct trends. In the early twentieth century, couples began to view marriage not merely as the foundational institution for familial relationships and the raising of children, but also as special companionship that satisfied emotional and romantic needs. Spouses "were supposed to be each other's companions—friends, lovers—to an extent not imagined by the spouses in the institutional marriages of the previous era. . . . [T]he emotional satisfaction of the spouses became an important criterion for marital success."[9] As a result, the importance of marriage in the minds of young people increased, so that 95% of young people in the United States married by the 1950s, about 5% more than those who married in the early part of the century. Young people also married younger than at the beginning of the century: age twenty-three for men (down from twenty-six) and twenty for women (down from twenty-two). As is widely known, the birth rate also increased, leading to the baby boom.[10]

After this time, however, laws regarding divorce began to change to eliminate fault or legal punishments in most divorces, weakening the legal institutionalization of marriage. This occurred with the second transition in marriage, which came to full expression toward the end of the twentieth century, in which young people began to view marriage as a unique relationship for individual expression and fulfillment. Developing out of the earlier transition to emotional satisfaction, married persons began to focus more on personal satisfaction in general. They "began to think more in terms of the development of their own sense of self and the expression of their feelings, as opposed to the satisfaction they gained through building a family and playing the roles of spouse and parent." Personal development, rather than mutual sacrifice, the malleability of roles, and communication that would confront and address problems rose to characterize beliefs about

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[8] Seltzer, "Families Formed Outside of Marriage," 1249.

[9] Andrew J. Cherlin, "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66, no. 11 (2004): 851.

[10] Cherlin, "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage," 852. The following discussion draws heavily on Cherlin, 852–853.

marriage by the end of the twentieth century. The individualization of marriage could be characterized as "an intimate partnership entered into for its own sake, which lasts only as long as both partners are satisfied with the rewards (mostly intimacy and love) that they get from it."

These transitions in the social understanding of marriage have attenuated the central place of marriage in the contemporary social context. Society accepts more forms of so-called marriage and other alternative relationships, so that intimacy, sexual relations, and even the raising of children need no longer occur within the social institution of marriage. Much of the decline in marriage since the mid-1960s is matched with a rise in cohabitation.[11] Even while individuals accepted the decline of marriage, they still sought the companionship and structure of marriage-like relationships.

Cohabiting women's sexual behavior, such as frequency of sexual relations and the use of birth control, is closer to that of married women. Cohabitors see living together as an opportunity to assess compatibility, while fewer see marriage as a defining characteristic of their lives. Although individuals at first see cohabitation as an alternative to the companionship of marriage, socially the difference, although moderated, persists. Cohabitation dissolves more quickly and more frequently than marriage due to the persistent legal and social institutionalization of marriage. Marriages are more difficult to dissolve also because of the pooling of resources and mutual "investments," such as children, a pooling that occurs to a lesser extent among the cohabiting.

This pooling of investments retains for marriage another importance—namely, one of economics. In the place of a committed companionship that supports family life, marriage is seen as an economic relationship, by which the pooling of economic resources gives partners advantages. If one spouse loses his job, the other's job mitigates the loss of income. Pooling incomes, a home, and other significant property is more attainable. Yet, at the same time, economic uncertainty and the fear of the loss of economic independence may hinder marriage. Cohabitation requires fewer up-front economic achievements, while marrying couples feel the need to reach certain economic goals, such as a house, a secure career, or a minimum level of income in order to support a family. While only 33% of women marry by age twenty-four (in a 2007 study), 60% of women cohabit by that age. Cohabitation offers many of the same benefits of marriage and

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[11] Seltzer, "Families Formed Outside of Marriage," 1249. The following discussion draws heavily on Seltzer, 1249–1254.

has begun to substitute for early marriage and to be seen as "a viable pathway out of singlehood for young adults."[12] That is, depending on a person's situation, cohabitation may serve as a mediating step between singleness and marriage, or it may serve as an alternative to marriage.

As a moderating relationship, cohabitation contributes to (but is only one factor in) a delay in the age of marriage and of childbearing. Recall that the rewards sought in revisionist marriage and marriage-like relationships have changed from those oriented around social expectations about family stability and the proper raising of children to fulfilling personal needs.[13] In this sense, marriage retains value among many as a relationship of status and recognition. Marriage makes the statement that the partners have "passed a milestone in the development of their self-identities," and have reached a comfortable, stable (if still progressing moderately) stage in life.[14] Marriage now is typically a sign of maturity, not a relationship to enter into when one is merely entering adulthood. Thus, the elevation of the average age of marriage since the 1960s is affected not only by economic factors but psychological ones. Marriages are delayed until couples have reached a psychological or emotional maturity.[15]

This research suggests that marriage has not been completely deinstitutionalized and remains valued, but that other priorities have shifted the place of marriage. Significantly, young American adults desire to avoid mistakes in marriage or marriages characterized by abuse, discord, or being prone to divorce. Love and companionship are still of central importance, but these can be found and experienced in other contexts or relationships, such as cohabitation.[16] Marriage is no longer reserved even for companionship and romance, but for the mature and established person.

This more recent understanding of marriage as the capstone of adulthood is illustrated in the difference between the *marriage naturalist* and the *marriage planner*. From a sociological perspective, marriage naturalists are holdovers from a bygone era. They see marriage as an inevitable and seamless step in life, to be entered into as the natural result of a

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[12] Jeremy E. Uecker and Charles E. Stokes, "Early Marriage in the United States," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70, no. 11 (2008): 837.

[13] Cherlin, "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage," 853.

[14] Cherlin, "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage," 857.

[15] Donald T. Rowland, "Historical Trends in Childlessness," *Journal of Family Issues* 28, no. 10 (2007): 1329.

[16] Maria J. Kefalas, et al., "'Marriage Is More than Being Together': The Meaning of Marriage for Young Adults," *Journal of Family Issues* 32, no. 7 (2011): 871.

romantic relationship as the couple enters adulthood. Full maturity and commitment develop *within* the marriage relationship, not prior to it.[17]

On the other hand, marriage planners prepare for marriage by establishing themselves as adults, educationally, professionally, financially, and mentally, prior to considering and entering into marriage.[18] Even once maturity and independence have been reached, they then need to achieve a level of commitment with their partner before marrying. "[F]or planners commitment must be achieved by gaining intimate knowledge of one's partner, experiencing decisions and setbacks together, learning to communicate, developing a sense of mutual trust, and believing that their relationship has a kind of inevitability; that is, that they are the 'right person' for one another."[19] By way of contrast, the marriage naturalist, commitment is not achieved, as it were; it happens when the couple marries and lives each day in view of this established, committed relationship.

The naturalist perspective is nourished in locations with a lower cost of living and economies in which moderate education provides a comfortable earning potential, such as in rural areas. On the other hand, a post-industrial economy with a high cost of living and the need for high levels of education and work experience to achieve financial self-sufficiency encourages the perspective of the marriage planner.[20] From this we see that both psychological and economic factors drive one's perspective on marriage.

The researchers who have proposed this bilateral model of marriage naturalists and marriage planners claim that marriage has not been deinstitutionalized, just re-institutionalized. Their data does indicate that marriage is no longer connected strongly to childbearing and living together.[21] In fact, the acceptability of these practices outside of marriage has shifted the place of marriage from a central life institution to one of a capstone relationship for marriage planners. The marriage planner marries only after he has established himself as an adult by achieving educational and professional goals, reaching financial independence, and developing a marriage mentality, that is, "the cognitive framework that allows them to give up the self-interested ways of an unattached single so that they can commit

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[17] Kefalas, et al., "'Marriage Is More than Being Together,'" 856–870.

[18] Kefalas, et al., "'Marriage Is More than Being Together,'" 861–864.

[19] Kefalas, et al., "'Marriage Is More than Being Together,'" 864.

[20] Kefalas, et al., "'Marriage Is More than Being Together,'" 869.

[21] Kefalas, et al., "'Marriage Is More than Being Together,'" 864–866.

to the obligations and responsibilities of being a husband or wife."[22] Before he reaches this stage, he may easily cohabit one or more times.

Data on increased rates of childlessness since the 1960s also give us insights into the changed perspective on marriage. These increased rates of childlessness are associated with "individualism and freedom of choice,"[23] that is, simply a perspective that views childbearing—even within the context of active sexual life—as something to control and choose, rather than something to receive as a fruit and blessing from God in a sexual relationship. The exercise of this choice is linked to other changes, including "fertility control, contraceptive technology, female work preferences and patterns, and sexual and family norms."[24] The "equalization between the sexes of opportunities for nonfamilial roles" presents the opportunity for this freedom of choice, especially among women.[25]

II. Institutionalizing Cohabitation

The changing place of marriage in public opinion in the twentieth century is interwoven with the rise of cohabitation. Exploring the intricacies of the causality between the changing face of marriage and the rise of cohabitation is beyond the scope of this paper, although the data we have briefly reviewed suggest that the general rise in cohabitation followed the shift of marriage from a domestic institution oriented around raising children to that of a unique companionship that satisfied emotional and romantic needs, with the accompanying relaxation of divorce laws and social stigmas against cohabitation. Generally speaking, decisions about family are influenced by "trends toward greater individual autonomy," which is also supported by features of modern economics, the push toward sexual equality, developments in fertility control, and a changing psychology of maturity.[26]

Cohabitation is now an important opportunity for many people to experience romantic companionship and to test the waters for marriage, even while working toward reaching psychological and occupational maturity. Again, to summarize, the three main reasons for cohabitation are

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[22] Kefalas, et al., "'Marriage Is More than Being Together,'" 868.

[23] Rowland, "Historical Trends in Childlessness," 1321.

[24] D.L. Poston and E. Gotard, "Trends in Childlessness in the United States (1919–1975)," *Social Biology* 24, no. 3 (1977): 212; quoted in Rowland, "Historical Trends in Childlessness," 1321.

[25] Rowland, "Historical Trends in Childlessness," 1321.

[26] Seltzer, "Families Formed Outside of Marriage," 1258.

1) to provide some economic support while also allowing for a quick exit without economic ties to a partner, 2) to seek gender equality through psychological and occupational maturity with the resulting avoidance of stereotyped gender roles, and 3) to serve as a trial period for determining how well the partnership serves individual fulfillment.

Because of this significant role played by cohabitation, many sociologists and policy makers suggest further institutionalizing cohabitation with legal protections. This would serve to reduce its instable nature and support couples in these circumstances.[27] Cohabitation has little to no official legal recognition in the United States, although cohabiting partners may support their relationship legally through contracts, such as by sharing property rights, establishing lines of inheritance, and sharing power of attorney. Health and social insurance claims would require legislation.[28]

In all of this, although children are seen as central to family life, very little has been said about children. Advocates of legislation to institutionalize cohabitation further assume that the well-being of children of cohabiting partners can be managed positively. It is interesting to note that cohabiting couples who conceive are more likely to marry than those who do not, while having children reduces the chance that cohabiting couples will break up, even if they do not marry.[29] In having children, couples recognize the importance of commitment, which many see as having its best expression in marriage.

III. Marriage as a Divine Order, Not as a Choice

There is something of a loose irony concerning the contemporary status of marriage. Some people fear or conclude that marriage has become deinstitutionalized, or that its status as an institution has changed. In its place have arisen different ways of experiencing and expressing romantic companionship and domestic relationship, such as cohabitation. Promoters of cohabitation, or, at least, those who see it as a part of society that is here to stay, have suggested that legislation be developed to institutionalize cohabitation more fully. Those who cohabit are in need of legal support, just like married couples, to make the sharing of assets, benefits, and children easier and legally defendable.

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[27] Seltzer, "Families Formed Outside of Marriage," 1255, 1263.

[28] Seltzer, "Families Formed Outside of Marriage," 1262.

[29] Seltzer, "Families Formed Outside of Marriage," 1255.

Yet we already have the kind of legal support for these things that couples need. It is called "marriage." Somehow, in the convoluted developments of marriage over the last century, marriage has been adjusted, rejected, renamed, or marginalized, and yet what society generally wants and needs is marriage—a romantic companionship that is legally recognized and defined in order to support domestic life. They may call it something else, such as cohabitation or domestic partnership, but it is, fundamentally, marriage—so long as it is truly sexual, that is, male-female. When we recognize that the general, natural expression of domestic life includes the bearing and raising of children, we have, in its basic form, the biblical, traditional, and conjugal view of marriage.

It is this conjugal understanding of marriage that now requires further consideration. As a sexual union, marriage is a unique union. As Robert George points out, it is the only union that is a truly organic or biological union. Nearly all biological, or fleshly, acts can be accomplished by one independent body—for example respiration, circulation, and digestion. Indeed, fleshly union with respect to any of these bodily acts is impossible. Only in coitus do two bodies act for one biological function—that of procreation.[30] Coitus brings together two bodies in a fleshly union to make possible the singular biological act of procreation.

Any bodily touching that is not coitus—even other touching of a sexual nature—is not true bodily union but only juxtaposition or contiguousness, even if this juxtaposition happens to occur inside a person's body. One might argue that non-coital sexual relations nourish and express intimacy and emotional union. Yet such a union would be just that: one of emotion, the will, or the mind. It is still not a union of the flesh, by which two bodies act together as one body or one flesh, seeking a fleshly—that is, organic or biological—purpose.

The fleshly union of man and woman is fundamentally a bodily union, but it also includes the union of other human qualities, such as the will, the emotions, and the mind. In sexual relations a man and woman would also properly coordinate their wills, emotions, and minds. Indeed, their souls are coordinated and caught up with one another in the purposes of deepening and nourishing their relationship, of enjoying one another, and of conceiving, bearing, and raising a child. And, in this sense, marriage is not just mating. The relational bond is as much a part of the fleshly union as the biological union. Coitus is not the only element of marriage, yet it is one of the fundamental, unique elements of marriage. To insist upon the biological

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[30] Girgis, George, and Anderson, "What is Marriage?," 254.

or organic union as fundamental to marriage does not in any way marginalize the other ways that a husband and wife are united in marriage.

Nor does the fundamental character of fleshly union in marriage in any way diminish or annul the marriages of infertile couples. The union of flesh refers to the act of coitus. In coitus, man and woman come together as one organically. That this act should not later result in conception says nothing about the act of union itself. "[W]hether a couple achieves bodily union depends on facts about what is happening between their bodies," not other factors regarding the effectiveness of the reproductive system.[31]

It is, in fact, only through fleshly union that two people can be completely united. People of all sorts may be united emotionally, according to their wills, or according to their minds. Coworkers united to find the solution to a research question or to a mechanical problem in an automobile have a kind of union in intellect. Friends are united in common activities according to their wills and often according to their emotions. Bodily union, however, occurs only between two who engage in a union of the flesh. Thus, the only relationship that allows the full union of persons—bodily, emotionally, according to the will, and according to the mind—is the relationship that includes fleshly union, that is, marriage. St. Paul's words in Ephesians 5 express the character of this fleshly union: a union of love, of care, of growth, and of nourishment (Eph 5:28–30).

This, then, is the conjugal view of marriage: the "permanent and exclusive" relationship of a man and a woman expressed in conjugal acts, which also presume the conception of children. As such, marriage is oriented toward raising children.[32] The descriptors "permanent" and "exclusive" are fundamental both because the greatest companionship should be that which has no end and because the raising of children requires the enduring commitment of the parents. In both cases, permanency becomes a basis for trust. With a confidence that the spouse will not leave the marriage, a husband or wife lives in the intimate, trusting confidence to be self-giving both to spouse and to children.

Note here the fundamental difference: revisionist marriage is for romantic enjoyment and self-fulfillment. Conjugal marriage is to be united, and to grow in the unity, not only of bodies, but of love, through self-giving that expresses and confirms trust in the other.

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[31] Girgis, George, and Anderson, "What is Marriage?," 266.

[32] Girgis, George, and Anderson, "What Is Marriage?," 246.

Marriage, then, is no mere choice, but a new way of living. Marriage is a divine order of life, by which God naturally provides companionship for individuals and by which he himself continues to bring forth new natural life, educate children, and provide for them. Romance is a good and blessed quality of marriage that grows out of the conjugal relationship and commitment and ought to be nourished by the husband and wife. It is not, however, definitive of marriage.

Marriage is much more than a choice, because the presumption is that most will marry. Consider Luther's discussion of the Sixth Commandment:

> [Marriage] is a necessary [walk of life]; it is solemnly commanded by God that in general both men and women of all walks of life, who have been created for it, shall be found in this walk of life. To be sure, there are some (albeit rare) exceptions whom God has especially exempted, in that some are unsuited for married life, or others God has released by a high, supernatural gift so that they can maintain chastity outside of marriage. Where nature functions as God implanted it, however, it is not possible to remain chaste outside of marriage; for flesh and blood remain flesh and blood, and natural inclinations and stimulations proceed unrestrained and unimpeded, as everyone observes and experiences. Therefore, to make it easier for people to avoid unchastity in some measure, God has established marriage, so that all may have their allotted portion and be satisfied with it. (LC I 211–212)

Where nature functions, it is not possible to remain chaste outside of marriage. Our earlier brief sociological survey certainly confirms Luther's words. While the perceived burdens of marriage have been rejected by society, the desire for companionship remains, and not only does marriage remain, but also other relationships, such as cohabitation, have arisen as attempts to meet the desire for companionship and so-called self-fulfillment (which even the most radical of marriage revisionists acknowledge happens because people are in relation to another). Society cannot surpass the natural inclination to sexual relations, and it struggles to find ways to enjoy these relations. All along, however, marriage has stood as God's gift for the expression of sexual relations and the relationship—indeed the intimate one flesh—that is inherent with sexual relations.

When marriage remains in the realm of mere choice, it becomes one other option, to choose or not to choose, to enjoy once I am mature or not, or to cap my entrance into and success in adulthood. Except for those who have been given the gift of celibacy, marriage is not a choice. It is a relationship into which we are called. Choice plays a role, to some extent, in the decision of whom we marry and when we marry, and, to be sure, we choose every day to love and serve our spouses. Yet fundamental to these choices is God's calling of us into this natural and blessed institution.

The title of this study includes the term "divorce." When we understand and teach marriage rightly, the teaching on divorce becomes clear. Just as those without the gift of celibacy do not have the choice not to marry, so they do not have the choice, strictly speaking, to divorce. Divorce is not a choice of one or both spouses, but a recognition of the brokenness of the marriage. There are reasons for divorce—real reasons that ought to be upheld and defended so that our injured brothers and sisters may be defended: sexual infidelity, abuse, or abandonment. When there is no repentance or the breach of trust is irreconcilable in such cases, the marriage is broken, and there is divorce. Divorce exists not from the beginning but because of our hardness of heart. Precisely because our hardness of heart remains until the resurrection, divorce also remains until the resurrection. And it ought to remain, for the sake, love, and defense of the one sinned against. Divorce protects Christians; it does not stigmatize them. Divorce renews the opportunity for married life for the Christian.

Thus, in a simple sense, neither marriage nor divorce are choices, but come upon us. The former is given as a great gift to be embraced by God, and the latter is the protection and renewal of Christians who have been sinned against in marriage. This is how the church should view and practice marriage. The church should teach and model marriage as a conjugal relationship, a permanent and exclusive union that God establishes and by which he teaches us how to love and to raise up the next generation in fear of him. It is not mere romance, but a solemn order, not to be tweaked or revised or renamed, even in the face of secular challenges. It should teach and model the good things and fruits of marriage, of which romantic pleasure is only one part, and not the greatest part. It should teach and model this truth: that in the bond of marriage husbands and wives learn true love in the giving of themselves to their spouses, that fathers and mothers learn true love in the giving of themselves for the nurture and education of their children, and that they learn that true love is to empty oneself for the sake of another. A person does not mature before he marries. A person learns to mature by living in marriage, supported by family and the church. This is not the self-fulfillment of secular society, and the sooner children learn this, the sooner they will be on their way to embracing conjugal marriage. As they learn these truths of marriage, they will be ready to marry as they approach adulthood, not waiting to attain some level of maturity at age thirty or forty, a maturity that will never really come, because the individual has not given himself over to love another.

Yet, finally, conjugal marriage is true self-fulfillment. It is the union not only of feelings and will, but of the flesh. It is a union and fulfillment deeper, more complex, and more mystical than the romance of secularism. It is an expression of true, permanent love, the love that Christ shows and expresses toward his church. Out of such love comes new life, and out of such love comes the inexpressible joy of true fellowship. This is the love, joy, and fulfillment that our culture longs for, which it has ironically abandoned in marriage, even while stumbling out to embrace it again. For decades, the church has followed the culture. Let the church now, in marriage also, be the church, and once again be a light for the culture, whether those of the culture come to the light or not. Is this a retreat, separation, or flight from culture? Not when we have the courage to acknowledge that this is to teach and practice that for which the culture truly longs.

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Pastoral Care and Sex

Harold L. Senkbeil

In the utter confusion that reigns supreme in our culture regarding sexuality and marriage, it is tempting for pastors to put on other hats in order to address the chaos. And capable historians, psychologists, and sociologists certainly have much to contribute in matters fundamentally moral and ethical. Pastors, however, are called upon daily to tackle these issues not in a theoretical way, but in terms of concrete human existence as it impacts people in their most fundamental vocation: sex. That is, from conception on, each human being is fundamentally a sexual being created male or female in the image and likeness of God. All contemporary "gender theory" aside, there are no generic humans. Humanity is binary and humans live embodied lives from the moment of their conception. Therefore matters of sexuality are always involved in the pastoral care of human beings, even in matters that are not overtly sexual.

Shepherding Sexual Souls

Although these matters are clearly moral and ethical, pastors dare never relinquish their primary calling as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Clearly, pastors are not primarily ethicists, nor are they moral policemen or sexual traffic cops. They remain always *pastors*, that is, shepherds of souls for whom Jesus died—souls that are embodied as male or female human creatures, made in the image and likeness of God. My approach in this essay, therefore, will be pastoral instead of ethical. As soon as you mention "pastoral," many interpret that word as inherently compromising and conciliatory—as in "who am I to judge?" As Lutheran pastors we know better. We are not interested in compromise. Our concern is genuine healing. We are *Seelsorgers*, approaching each situation as spiritual physicians working from diagnosis to treatment. So that is the template that we need to lay over every circumstance involving sexual ethics: what are the underlying ailments in each situation, and how may they best be addressed? If you approach sexual sin strictly as a case of moral failure, you will miss the diagnosis entirely and will not be able to provide a lasting

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cure. If, on the other hand, you see moral aberrations as symptoms of underlying misbelief and idolatry, you are more likely to get an accurate diagnosis and thus provide for a valid and more faithful treatment.

We must remember that we are called to the kingdom in these tumultuous days during a momentous time of great opportunity. This is not a time for hand-wringing and despair. What to us appears to be cataclysmic chaos is not just the normal change in worldviews, but actually the transition from one epoch to another. If I may use an analogy, what we are experiencing is the cultural equivalent of an earthquake. Scientists tell us that the tectonic plates of the earth are constantly shifting silently and imperceptibly, and when enough tension builds up over the centuries, there is a sudden and dramatic realignment of the earth's crust.

What we are seeing in terms of crumbling public mores and the apparent collapse of sexual norms and boundaries with subsequent redefinitions for marriage and family is evidence of the cultural earthquake we are currently undergoing. At no time since the days when the Roman Empire was grinding its way into collapse has the church faced such a time of simultaneous challenge and opportunity. Students of church history note that it is in such times of dramatic cultural shift and transition that the church finds new life and vitality—but only if she does not hitch her wagon to the cultural shooting stars that flame into brilliance, then quickly flame out into black holes.

Cultural Drift and Moral Shift

There were some distant early warnings of the cataclysm we are experiencing. I ran across the first while rummaging in a used book store in the late 1990s. Written by Chad Walsh, poet and professor of English who was an early champion of the works of C.S. Lewis, its provocative title was "Early Christians of the 21st Century."[1] At first I thought it was misshelved. But then I discovered that it was published in 1950. In his book Walsh argues that, given the cultural trajectory of postwar America, by the end of the century the Christian veneer of the West would have peeled back and a new paganism would appear. He predicted that by the dawn of the new millennium Christianity would be only a dim and vanishing memory, culturally speaking. He wrote: "'Modern civilization,' which dates roughly from the Renaissance, is now on its last legs."[2] Remember,

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[1] Chad Walsh, *Early Christians of the 21st Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1950).

[2] Walsh, *Early Christians of the 21st Century*, 9.

he published this in 1950! He went on to observe that many were predicting at that time that Christianity, having been on the decline for several centuries, would shortly fade away completely. Walsh held out another option—namely, that the decline of Western civilization was due to the watering down of Christianity and that a return to Christian teaching would be the price a reluctant world would have to pay if it wanted any civilization at all.

A generation later another voice was raised foretelling our seismic cultural shift. Malcolm Muggeridge was a former BBC correspondent who became not only one of Christianity's most notable converts, but among its most ardent and articulate apologists. In 1978 he gave the inaugural addresses in the Pascal Lectures of the University of Waterloo in Ontario. His lectures were published in 1980 under the intriguing title: "The End of Christendom." In these lectures he outlines in meticulous detail the collapse of the Christian consensus first of all in the humanities and then subsequently in terms of social mores. He characterized this as a kind of corporate death wish masquerading under the banner of liberalism. There is a certain irony about the toppling of the Christian consensus; he notes:

> Previous civilizations have been overthrown from without by the incursion of barbarian hordes. Christendom has dreamed up its own dissolution in the minds of its own intellectual elite. Our barbarians are home products, indoctrinated at the public expense, urged on by the media systematically stage by stage, dismantling Christendom, depreciating and deprecating all its values. The whole social structure is now tumbling down, dethroning its God, undermining all its certainties. All this, wonderfully enough, is being done in the name of the health, wealth, and happiness of all mankind. That is the basic scene that seems to me will strike a future Gibbon as being characteristic of the decline and fall of Christendom.[3]

Now of course Muggeridge is quick to point out the distinction between "Christendom," as he calls it, and the Christian church. Both he and Walsh, despite their dire predictions about the direction of culture and public policy, also believed the turbulent years that we are now experiencing would be days of great opportunity for the church. The term "Christendom," as Muggeridge uses it, refers not to the church, but to the post-Constantinian alliance forged between the church and the state in various lands and various eras throughout the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and into the time of the Enlightenment and modernity. These men

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[3] Malcolm Muggeridge, *The End of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 17–18.

were not using the now-fashionable word "postmodernity" (or late modernity, as I like to call it), but what they were talking about is what we see all around us now: the rapid demise of the impact of Christian teaching on public life and its near-total eclipse when it comes to public policy and social institutions, including government. Maybe the church's alliance with Caesar at the time of Constantine was not that good of an idea, but its day is clearly over now. The coalition between Christianity and government—or even between Christianity and society—is collapsing in ruin all around us. Christendom is dead, but Christ's church remains forever. "I will build my church," says Jesus, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18).

The Pastoral Challenge

So here is our current challenge: How are we to be the church built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone, without relying on all the social props that we have had for centuries and while everything around us is in radical cultural upheaval and chaos?

It used to be that you needed the vantage point of decades to sense these cultural shifts, but they are coming now with increasing frequency and intensity. There was a time when only geezers of my vintage would talk about the "the good old days," but now Gen Xers, in the prime of life, are beginning to sound like sentimental oldsters when they reminisce about the simpler days of their childhood. The half-life of moral decline and decay is getting shorter and shorter.

Who could have foretold a decade ago, when advocates for gay rights were just beginning to let their presence be known, that we would now be sitting post-*Obergefell* with same-sex marriage declared a constitutional right by the Supreme Court of the United States of America? Who would have anticipated the winner of an Olympic men's decathlon getting the courage award for excellence in sports performance, not for sports performance, but for his public transition to faux womanhood? As we speak, legal aid societies are trying to determine how to protect business owners from being sued out of existence because of their refusal to compromise their religious convictions regarding the definition of marriage. Meanwhile, gender identification is gaining steam as the deciding factor over against biological sex, and some states have already enacted legislation opening public school restrooms to children who wish to "identify" as a person of the opposite sex without regard to their external genitalia.

It seems to me there are four propositions foundational for addressing these unprecedented phenomena and in laying groundwork for careful teaching and pastoral care in the midst of the sexual cataclysm all around us.

1) Christians find their identity in the city of God, not the city of man.

Some years ago, Robert Kolb drily observed in one of his lectures: "The Eisenhower Administration isn't coming back again anytime soon." It was his way of pointing out the obvious: the comfortable postwar world that characterized church life in America in generations past is gone for good. We can no longer assume that the American way of life and Christianity are synonymous, though, as I mentioned above, that assumption was problematic all along.

The City Set on a Hill

What this means, though, is that we must be more deliberate in modeling and teaching Christian behavior; the culture will not do it for us. Not that it ever did, but first with every passing era, then each passing year, and now month by month we see the devolution of a society that is imploding morally and socially. There was a time when you could look up and down the street or across the road to your farm neighbors and assume that what you saw there was a Christian way of life. Those days are now officially in the rear-view mirror; they are not coming back. We need to prepare Christian people to be what our Savior said they would be: a city set on a hill that cannot be hid, the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. Those who live for Christ and his kingdom will increasingly look like oddballs and freaks in a world in which people create their own persona and lifestyle out of their own pleasures and urges. A world full of unbridled egos is not a pretty picture; expressive individualism on steroids is no way to build a healthy society. Worse, it is a spiritual disaster zone. As our Lord reminds us, the wide gate and the easy road lead to destruction, but the narrow gate and the hard road lead to eternal life (Matt 7:13–14). Our task is to shepherd Christ's sheep and lambs safely through these perils to life everlasting, and that means guiding them along the path less traveled.

Resident Aliens

So the first thing we will need to stress in our teaching regarding sexual behavior is that what passes for acceptable behavior legally and socially can no longer guide Christians. We will not become monastics or Amish; we will not disengage entirely from the world. We will be resident aliens, if you will. We will be critical of whatever is handed to us by pop culture, and we will not bow the knee to the faddish idols of our day in terms of the arts and entertainment world. Like the Christians of late antiquity, there will be certain things acceptable to everyone else that will be off limits for us. For them it was the public games that included bloodlust and death, for us it will be x-rated movies and video games, to cite but a couple of obvious examples.

We must refuse to let the world define us. We will be very much in the world, but not of the world. Like others who know not the Lord Jesus, we may reside in the city of man, but our true identity is found in the city with foundations, whose maker and builder is God. And this identity, we must hasten to add, is as much caught as taught. Perhaps more caught than taught, actually. That is, people do not just need to hear orthodox teaching from their pastors on these crucial matters of sexual identity and fidelity; they need to actually see it modeled and lived in their pastors, in their households, and among fellow Christians. There must be orthopraxy to accompany orthodoxy.

We find this concern for modeling Christian godliness throughout the Scriptures. One example will suffice. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul urges his charges to keep an eye on those who live according to his example, reminding them that those who live only according to bodily impulses are enemies of the cross of Christ. "Their end is destruction," he writes, "their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things" (Phil 3:19). And yet, the apostle contends, Christians are not disembodied spirits. There is a physicality to the sexual standards he urges on them. The body is not a tool for self-gratification, but a creation of God redeemed by his Son and sanctified by his Spirit. The body is not for this world only; as citizens of a heavenly kingdom here in this world, Christians live in their bodies now in complete awareness that the fullness of their bodily existence is yet to come when the Savior appears at the end of time to transform our lowly body to be like his already glorious body, "by the power that enables him to subject all things to himself" (Phil 3:21). Yes, we live in the city of man, but our true identity is found in the city of God.

2) Sexual identity is not a social construct but is rooted in creation.

The second and third propositions flow from the first. That is, since our heavenly citizenship is rooted in creation, redemption and sanctification, that means our sexual life is grounded in the mystery of the Holy Trinity as well. "God made me . . . and *all my members* . . . and still takes care of them" is the way Luther put it in his usual earthy way in the explanation to the first article.[4] Let us put that to our catechumens plainly and bluntly and ponder it deeply ourselves. Sexual distinction is by God's design, deeply engraved on his creation. A person's gonads along with all other bodily organs as well as his or her personality, brain, and intellect do not originate in blind chance but are lovingly and deliberately created by God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. We are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made, and that wondrous creation most certainly includes our sexual nature.

That means we do not get to define our own sexual identity; it is divinely created and ordained. This biblical view, of course, is not only dramatically countercultural but highly controversial. Ever since the Enlightenment the idea has been gaining momentum that people determine their own identity for themselves; they have the inherent right to define themselves. For example, the so-called right to privacy, upon which the courts have based their decisions dismantling legal protection for unborn life and the boundaries of sexual license, is not inscribed in our Constitution. Rather, the courts have manufactured this legal fiction out of the popular social consensus that individual preferences trump sound reason and the common good. So even though the plain meaning of the Constitution's written text makes no provision for a right to privacy, justices who reflect the bias of the current world view claim to have discovered it in what they call the "penumbras and emanations" of the Constitution.

So with expressive individualism and individual rights firmly ensconced as the central and determining factor in the public arena, it follows that all social strictures automatically come under suspicion. Most every accepted social institution goes under scrutiny, and the hermeneutic of suspicion claims that these institutions were invented by people intent on limiting personal freedom and expression. Under this view it is not only legitimate, but also necessary to dismantle these institutions, deconstructing them into their component parts and then reassembling them to conform to personal preference or current fads and fashions. So we now have almost any domestic living arrangement of adults and children qualifying as "family" without regard to biological or conjugal relationships.

Sex Deconstructed

But deconstructionism goes further than social institutions, it now seeps over into the fabric of creation itself. Male and female sexes become

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[4] *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 105.

arbitrary self-chosen persona rather than created givens. Thus, contemporary gender theory insists that masculinity or femininity is a projection of one's own feelings having no connection to so-called "assigned gender" at birth. The body therefore becomes ancillary to sex rather than determinative of sex. It is not much more than a machine or mechanism to express one's chosen identity as male or female and, still further, one's preferred sexual expression. So far the only limitations on sexual liaisons is that they must be by mutual consent with a person who is an adult, although those strictures are now beginning to be questioned as well.

This is deconstructionism run amuck, when biological reality itself can be ignored or reconstructed to conform to personal preference. The brouhahas already cropping up across the country when boys choose to use girls' restroom and locker room facilities or vice versa are only the tip of the iceberg; we are facing a radically different world than ever before in human history.

Yet we have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. It is our joyous privilege to teach and model an understanding of human sexuality rooted not in social theory or personal preference, but in God's own creation. Sexual identity is not a social construct; it is rooted in creation. The creation narrative of Genesis gives us the warp and woof from which to weave the rich tapestry of what it means to be man and woman in our time.

"God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26, 27). And so God combined the dust of the ground with the breath of his own life-giving Spirit, and Adam became a living soul. But it was not good that he should be alone, therefore the Lord extracted a rib from Adam's side and built a woman from Adam's rib. Note that although they were created in complementary ways socially, physically, and emotionally, they were fully male and female prior to their one flesh union.

Ontological Sex

It is important in the hypersexualized climate in which we live to stress that sex is something you are, not something you do. In other words, one can be fully male or fully female without engaging in erotic activity. Too many youth and adults are ashamed to admit that they are not sexually active because they are getting the message from our culture that the frequent orgasm of your choice is definitive for human sexuality. Thus chastity is ridiculed, and those who live sexually pure and decent lives in what they say and do are not only viewed as relics of the distant past, but somehow freakish and subhuman.

In a world that has lost its story, Christians need not only to learn the creation narrative but to embrace it as their own, and to literally be that story before a watching world, fully male and fully female, glorifying God in their bodies as they live out their sexual vocation—abstinently apart from marriage and faithfully devoted to their spouse within marriage. Sexual identity as male and female is not a self-constructed reality but is rooted and grounded in creation.

3) Christians understand that their bodies are ransomed by Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Many have noted the new Gnosticism that seems to pervade the thinking of our culture, as well as its unfortunate influence on the church. In the secular sphere it partially explains the schizophrenic attitude toward sex that on the one hand prizes sensuality and promotes sexual indulgence, yet at the same time is hypersensitive to anything that could be remotely construed as sexual harassment. People are encouraged to dress as whores and gigolos, yet express alarm when others respond sexually. Sexual innuendo in entertainment is passé, and now overt sex-play and mock sex acts are woven into song and dance routines. Yet at the same time, our world professes great shock about the rise of sexually transmitted diseases and the sexual abuse and violence that abound. Sexual copulation is viewed as the means toward fulfillment and spiritual enlightenment, yet at the same time the human body is viewed as an empty container that can be trashed at will. Preborn babies are dismissively called "products of conception," and their body parts are dissected and sold to the highest bidder.

The most extreme examples of sexual degradation and dysfunction still rouse disapproval and concern among Christians, of course, yet the spirit of the age has caused great confusion in our churches as well. It is important that pastors find their voice and teach the truth regarding foundational matters having to do with human sexuality, and it begins with the propositions outlined in this paper. First, we live not according to the standards of behavior acceptable in society, but rather in accord with our calling as God's people. Second, sexuality is not constructed socially, but created by God. Now, third: Our bodies are not our personal property; rather, they were created by God the Father, redeemed by his Son, and sanctified by Holy Baptism as temples of the Holy Spirit.

Theology of the Body

This trinitarian theology of the body needs to be recovered and utilized at every point in catechesis and preaching. Although a theology of the body is pivotal regarding sexual ethics, it has multiple overtones of meaning at every dimension of Christian faith and life. We are sexual beings; there are no generic humans—only males and females. That means that our identity as male or female is our most fundamental and foundational Christian vocation. Whatever we do, whether we eat or drink, we do all to the glory of God—and we do it not generically, but as a man or a woman. In other words, the doctrine of the creation, redemption, and sanctification of the body frees sex from the narrow confines of erotic attraction to find its rightful place as a positive force in the life we live in this world as enfleshed spirits—or spiritual bodies, whichever way you prefer to look at it.

The immense power of the sexual drive was designed by God the Father as a wonderful gift to join man and woman together in bodily union as husband and wife for their mutual joy and support and for the procreation and nurture of children. Yet this wondrous gift of a loving Creator was polluted and defiled by the rebellion of Adam and Eve in the garden so that the distinctive nature that he had given them in his perfect creation was a cause of shame after their fall into sin. Their bodies, which had been their mutual joy and delight, were now contaminated by sin and befouled by shame. And so it is to this day. As Paul writes to the Romans, "[T]he Law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin" (Rom 7:14). Not that the human body or its sexual drive is in itself evil, but the evil one has taken the natural gifts of God's good creation and enslaved them for his own purpose. And so the stage is set for struggle. What the Christian wants to do according to the renewed will, he finds himself unable to do because of the temptations of the flesh. Delighting in the law of God in his inner being, there is another law in the parts of his body waging war against the law of his mind. As Paul put it: "I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members" (Rom 7:23).

Enfleshed Salvation

The Son of God, however, has appeared in order to undo the effects of sin and the captivity of the devil. Taking on our humanity, he was incarnate in male flesh, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary to break the bonds of slavery to sin. It is not the angels that he redeemed, but the offspring of Abraham. He was made like his brothers in every way—that means that he had boy parts like all males—so that he could make payment for the sins of the people. "Because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb 2:18). Our high priest is able to sympathize with us in our weakness, because He was tempted like us in every way—including sexually, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). His was not a spiritual redemption, but a very physical one in which he was stripped and flogged and nailed up to die in naked shame to ransom us out from under captivity to sin, death, and the devil. In his perfect body he bore all sin and carried our iniquity and covered all our shame. Ransomed and redeemed by his body and blood, we stand forgiven, cleansed, and free from shame, and clothed in his perfect righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

This same Jesus who is our righteousness is also our holiness. That is, he is our covering for both sin and shame. His sacrifice not only removes our guilt but also cleanses us from the defilement of our sin. Buried with him by Baptism into his death, through the same washing we are risen with him into his resurrection. It is not a spiritual resurrection he gives us, but a physical one. His sacred body, born of Mary, is the instrument of our salvation by which he removed the penalty of our sin and restores us in body and soul to the innocence of our first parents in Eden.

That means that our salvation is also physical. As Paul wrote: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). His was not a spiritual ransom, but a physical one, pertaining not merely to souls, but to bodies as well. That means our bodies are not our private possession for our own entertainment or personal pleasure; they belong to the One who ransomed us in his own flesh and blood.

In the washing of Holy Baptism we were joined to Jesus in his death and resurrection, and by the same washing the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in our bodies. Christians are to be taught to revere their bodies as shrines in which the Holy Spirit lives, filled therefore with God's own holiness to cleanse them from iniquity, cover up their shame, and renew them for God's service, whether married or single. Paul wrote to the Christians in the decadent city of Corinth, sorely tempted to the promiscuous life of sexual indulgence of their neighbors, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:19–20).

Reverence for the Body

In a world that literally treats the body like trash, Christians live dramatically different lives than their secular neighbors. We understand these bodies of ours as special creations of a loving heavenly Father, who made us each through the instrumentation of the bodies of our human fathers and mothers and has given us each unique eyes, ears, and all our body parts, and still takes care of them. He does all this out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy without any merit or worthiness in us. Not only that, but we been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Christ Jesus has become our Lord, for he has purchased and won us from sin, death, and the devil's dominion, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and the innocent, suffering death of his own perfect body, that we might be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness in these physical bodies of ours just as he himself is risen from the dead, lives, and reigns in physical flesh to all eternity. And the Holy Spirit has not just called us by the gospel, but enlightened us with his gifts and placed us within the fellowship of his holy church, a communion of holy people sanctified by his holy things, forgiving us all our sins each and every day. On the last day the same Spirit will raise these bodies of ours from the decay of death and give to all believers eternal life in both body and soul. It is our joy and delight, then, to live as sexual beings, men and women created, redeemed, and sanctified to be holy just as God is holy, clothed in the perfection and holiness of Christ himself.

Therefore, despite the sin rampant everywhere around us and the lust that continually tugs at us from within, we live a new and different life by the grace and mercy of God. For though we are continually tempted, we are also continually redeemed and sanctified. Sinful lusts indeed attack, but they need not enslave those who belong to God by faith in Christ. Their bodies have been purchased and won by him, and the Holy Spirit is enshrined within them by Holy Baptism. Dead and alive by Baptism into Christ, they belong to him who once was dead but lives forever. This makes all the difference in the world in terms of temptation to sexual sin.

Let us not make this complicated; we need to speak plainly and forthrightly to both youth and adults about the human body and its passions, and then speak just as straightforwardly about what it means to offer all the parts of our body to God as instruments for good. This is the baptismal therapy unpacked by Paul in his letter to the Christians in Rome:

> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for

> unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (Rom 6:12–14)

Our sexual organs too have been ransomed with Christ's blood and sanctified by God's Spirit to serve the living God.

4) For Christians, sexual identity is a holy vocation, whether married or single, reflecting the union and harmony within the godhead.

To be man and woman created in God's image and likeness by his express purpose and will is far different than to be a generic human being evolved haphazardly by chance who happens to be endowed with a peculiar sexual apparatus with unique appetites and compulsions. Whether we see human sexual desire as an itch to be scratched or a gift to be channeled makes all the difference in the world. In the first instance, the sexual drive is like any other physical appetite that craves indulgence. In the second, sex is honored as a gift from God intended for union and communion. "In our image and after our likeness" was the blueprint for mankind, made in two distinct sexes (Gen 1:26). In other words, in their sexual differentiation Adam and Eve reflected the distinction between the persons of the Godhead. And in the relationship of human beings with one another, most especially in the sexual union of man and wife, there was a reflection of the unity of the Holy Trinity. This is a great mystery, and it deserves reflection, contemplation, and exposition in our preaching and teaching, particularly as sexual distinctions become ever less important in society and as sexual deviations and decadence become ever more common and prevalent.

God Made Sex

Sex was God's idea. Sexual differentiation is reflected in his entire creation, both plant and animal. And the whole creation, including sex, he declared "very good" (Gen 1:31). We no longer live in Eden, to be sure. There is nothing we can do by our reason or strength to put all the broken pieces of God's good and perfect creation back together again. Like Humpty Dumpty, all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot glue things back together the way they once were. There is no road back to sexual perfection here in this world.

Yet even though fallen and contaminated by sin, sex remains part of God's good creation. Perhaps one of the reasons we find so many Christians ill-prepared to face the sexual debacles of our time is that we have not catechized them well regarding this most intimate part of our collective

Christian vocation. By default we have given people the impression that they can govern their sexual lives like everyone else in society. During the days of "Christendom" this worked—not perfectly, but it worked to some extent. Sexual behavior that was in conformity to God's will and law was the social norm to a large extent, and deviant or immoral sexual behavior was penalized in social mores and to some degree by secular law. But no longer. "Christendom" has fallen, apparently never to rise again. In our world now, just as in the world of late antiquity, it falls to Christian men and women to take up the challenge of teaching and modeling a life of sexual faithfulness in a society that is driven by the unbridled compulsions of the sexual drive.

Our Sexual Vocation

That means we have to be forthright when it comes to matters of sex and marriage. Silence on these matters means that we open our homes and families to the Pandora's box of sexual promiscuity that pervades our contemporary culture. Finding our voice and speaking up is essential. And when we do speak, let us make sure we have more to say than "just say no." The sexual prohibitions of the Scriptures are there to protect and enhance sex as God's good creation within the covenant of marriage as a force for good within society, but the Bible also gives us something positive and constructive to say about the sexual vocation.

Let us speak discreetly and tastefully, but also winsomely and confidently about what God has built into the human body. Every Christian, and that includes pastors, is a sexual being with sexual drives. Sexual desire remains a force with which to be reckoned. It cannot be ignored, but must be channeled and directed for a godly purpose. The sexual drive was designed by God himself to bring man and woman together in bodily union as in the garden when Adam first saw Eve and exclaimed: "At last! Bone of my bones and flesh and of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man" (Gen 2:23). The express purpose and will of God for sexual differentiation and distinction is that man and woman would be united together in marriage. They are complementary in body, mind, and spirit. They are made for each other. It is for this reason that in every generation a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and they become one flesh. This is why marriage is not a secular or political institution, but a holy estate. It was instituted by God in the time of man's innocence as an earthly, physical expression of the eternal, spiritual unity and harmony between the persons of the Holy Trinity.

This marital union is an exclusive union, forsaking all others, as Bishop Cranmer put it in the time-honored wedding vows of the *Book of Common Prayer*, to be husband or wife to one another as long as they both shall live. So sexual abstinence apart from marriage and sexual faithfulness within it are the hallmarks of God's design for man and woman.

Chastity vs. Celibacy

Yet some Christians are not married. And it is not good that they remain in isolation either. Our society says do whatever seems natural to you. But since the fall into sin, what of course comes naturally to humans is not in accordance with God's design. So though arbitrary celibacy is not imposed on men and women made in God's image and likeness, they need his gift of chastity to live out their sexual vocations as male and female.

Chastity means to use the sexual drive for the glory and honor of God and the benefit of my neighbor. Therefore if I am single, I am sexually abstinent, and if I am married, I use my body for the benefit and pleasure of my spouse. As Bishop Cranmer put it in the husband's marriage vow, "With my body I thee worship," reflecting the man's sacred vocation of channeling all his bodily desire and sexual energy for the benefit of his beloved wife. Of course, ever since the fall such chaste direction of the sexual drive does not come naturally; sexual desire since Eden bleeds over into lustful compulsions and obsessions for self-gratification. But by daily contrition and repentance the old Adam dies and the new man emerges and arises to live before God in righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. Thus every day baptismal renewal brings forgiveness for past sins of the body and power to redirect bodily energies to the glory of God and the neighbor's welfare.

Corporate Chastity

The cult of privacy we have erected around sex is not only unhealthy, but distinctly unchristian. Sex is a public, corporate matter for the Christian, not in the sense of group orgies or erotic display, but in the fact that who I am as a sexual person and the way I use my body privately is never a private matter.

In a remarkable passage from his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul writes bluntly about sexual chastity among Christian men as a distinguishing mark of their brotherhood:

> For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own

> body [or "possess his own vessel"] in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter. (1 Thess 4:3–6)

The Greek word σκεῦος ("vessel") can refer to the male sexual organ.[5] Here the apostle clearly teaches that sanctification, which comes from God, includes not indulging in the kind of sexual license common among pagans who do not know God and therefore have not been sanctified. Rather than merely abstaining from sexual promiscuity, these men are to direct their sexual energies to honorable and holy use, so that it fuels not unbridled passionate lust, but chaste and brotherly love among Christian men. Failure in these areas is not just a matter of sin against God, but sin against the brother. Conversely, by implication, chastity and purity build up the bond of brotherhood among men within Christ's body.

Since we are all members one of another in the body of Christ, we bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. My sexual sins blemish and scar the other members of Christ's body. On the other hand, my chastity of mind and body enhance and edify my fellow members in their own life of sexual fidelity. Collectively we are all Christ's bride. Brothers and sisters within the family of God, we are all corporately pledged to faithfulness to our heavenly Husband; my private life of sexual chastity enhances our corporate life of fidelity to Christ Jesus, our mutual groom.

Corporate Love

Not all the members of Christ's body are married to an earthly spouse. Some are single, whether by circumstance or choice. God himself said that it is not good for man (or woman) to be alone. We are designed to live in community just as God the Holy Trinity has lived in eternal union and communion from all eternity. What about those who live singly, then, within the Body of Christ? Are they doomed to perpetual loneliness since they are not joined in conjugal union with a spouse? By no means; there are other forms of human intimacy besides marriage. There are other loves besides marital love. Just as there is love between parents and children and brothers and sisters, there is also love between friends. These loves are not contingent upon sexual intercourse.

Love is the distinguishing mark of Christ's church, because it flows from his all-encompassing divine *agape*, which is freely lavished on the

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[5] Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 928.

unlovable. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you,” Jesus says (John 15:12). “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Though for various reasons Christians may live for a time alone, they should never be lonely within Christ’s body, the church. Because God first loved us, we love one another. Forming bonds of friendship within the body of Christ is probably more important now than ever before. Whether a person is widowed, divorced, or never married, no matter to which sex that person is attracted, he or she is called to sexual chastity. But these single persons are not called to stoicism and isolation. Every brother or sister within the body deserves a heart open to their sorrows and joys and a mind eager to embrace their thoughts and dreams. Love is the mark of Christ’s church, and such love embraces all, married or single.

Our Corporate Mission

Leading a chaste and decent life in word and deed—a sexually pure life in what we say and do—is not the impossible dream, but a blessed reality for all those, married or single, who find their union and communion with Christ and one another in the blessed fellowship of his holy church, where all weep and rejoice together as one body. There is strength in numbers. Thank God, while the Holy Spirit calls us each singly by the gospel, he does not leave us alone. He also calls us corporately into that holy communion, which is his church, in which he richly and daily forgives not just all my sins, but also the sins of all believers in Christ.

Despite the seismic shift in sexual mores, the decline in the marriage culture, and the subtle and overt persecution of those who stand against the pervasive sexual immorality of our increasingly decadent society, it is our joint privilege to teach and model a life of sexual fidelity, bodily purity, and faithful commitment to our gracious God, who invites all his faithful to the joyous eternal marriage feast of the Lamb.

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Theological Observer

A Devotion on Luke 18:1–8

The following devotion was given at the Fall Faculty Forum of Concordia Theological Seminary on September 3, 2015. The Editors.

"*But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?*" This question came up toward the end of a conversation I was having with Peter Scaer earlier this summer, lamenting as we were one crushing defeat after another in which, among countless other setbacks, the Supreme Court legalized same-sex "marriage." The gist of our conversation was that things in America seem poised to go from bad to worse, and we in the church along with it. This passage resonated with me during a recent trip as I watched crowds of Muslim worshippers bowing and scraping at a makeshift mosque at the airport in Lagos, Nigeria, in 90 degree heat, or slightly earlier that evening when a corrupt official bilked me of sixty dollars to have my passport stamped so I could leave the country. Early the next morning in Paris, I saw more Muslims bowing and scraping toward Mecca on the airport floor, all this while I was in transit and so unable to worship at my home congregation. To compensate somewhat, I read David Scaer's *Discourses in Matthew*, holding the book in such a way that a woman wearing a hijab could not help but see the icon of Jesus on the book's front cover. It was, admittedly, a minor consolation, and ineffective at that. One could hardly call my behavior a suitable witness to Christ under the circumstances. But what is one to do? From our perspective, such people seem nearly unreachable.

"*But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?*" The question would seem to require the answer: no, he shall not. Faith in this world, where is it? Certainly not in the fanaticism of a virulent Islam, making its way into Europe, then across the Atlantic to once heavily Lutheranized cities such as Detroit, Michigan, where my flight took me into the United States, then on to Fort Wayne. Certainly not in America, where even definitive proof that Planned Parenthood traffics in baby body parts is met by callous indifference. And so-called same-sex "marriage." Let's not even go there. This is a prospect now almost too painful to imagine. But we can't hide our heads in the sand forever. Something must give soon, it seems, and it doesn't look pretty, nor does it seem things will go our way, the church's way.

"*But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?*" was a favorite verse of Martin Luther's. Clearly Luther answered Jesus' question in the negative. Let one of perhaps a dozen passages identified in the index volume of the American Edition of *Luther's Works* suffice: he lumps Luke 18:8 with other texts of doom and destruction, such as 1 Thessalonians 5:2 ("the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night"). Luther writes:

> These are terrifying statements. But the smug and ungrateful world, the despiser of all the promises and threats of God, abounds with every kind of iniquity and daily becomes more and more corrupt. Now that the rule of the popes, who have ruled the world solely through the fear of punishment, is over, men, through their contempt of the sound doctrine, all but degenerate into brutes and beasts. The number of holy and godly preachers is on the decline. All men yield to their desires. . . . Furthermore, Christ Himself has foretold these developments, and so it is impossible for us to believe that He has lied. But if the first world, which had so large a number of most excellent patriarchs, became so pitiably depraved, how much more should we fear when the feebleness of our nature is so great? Therefore, may the Lord grant that in faith and in the confession of His Son Jesus Christ we may as quickly as possible be gathered to those fathers and die within twenty years, so that we may not see those terrible woes and afflictions, both spiritual and physical, of the last time. Amen. (AE 1:336)

Luther says, then, that it is simply best to "die within twenty years" than "face these things." But despite such pessimism—both our own and the sainted Dr. Luther's—our Lord's question was intended originally to sum up the admirable pluck of that importunate widow who wouldn't take "No" for an answer from that corrupt judge who forthrightly admits that he neither fears God nor respects men. What gets him to yield is the unpleasant prospect of that woman shattering his blissful repose by her incessant demands for justice. "Finally she'll come and beat me down," the ESV says. But, as is usually the case, the original Greek is far more expressive: "she'll come and brow beat me," BDAG suggests—or even, "she'll come and give me a black eye [ὑπωπιάζῃ]!" That's why he yields. But there the comparison stops: "And shall not the true God dispense justice for the sake of his elect who cry out to him night and day, and shall he delay over them? I tell you that he shall wreak vengeance for them in haste!"

I take that to be a promise. So when the Son of Man comes he will indeed find faith on earth. Consider that when Christ visits his churches each Lord's Day he finds his elect gathered who do indeed cry out to him day and night. Jesus says here that God won't "delay over them." Then there is the nature of faith itself, which is more than our spiritual exertions or fervently wishing that things were thus, but rather a lively faith/confidence worked in Christ's believers through the word of God that we, of all people here on earth—no matter how few in number, or scattered—are privileged to hear. So the really difficult questions we face as a church (and as a seminary) will be met and resolved God-pleasingly—in his ways, in his times. No, we can't see just how God will stand by us in a future that is dark to us, in more ways than one; but he will, just as he always has—in Christ Jesus our Lord, who died that we might live, who rose that we might be forgiven—and beaver on like that importunate widow, with all her prayers and pluck.

Sometimes even we are permitted to see that there is faith on earth: in our students, whom to teach is a great honor that not one of us deserves—me least of all—but this is given to us all by grace, along with all of God's greater gifts; and to be in demand by other Lutherans throughout the world who look to us for theological leadership, and to help them gather in the harvest in other places that seem to us more open to the gospel. But whether the world is relatively open to Christ or seemingly shut to him, we labor on: in good times and in bad, in times of prosperity or in want. God, in his wisdom, has given each one of us a ministry to be about, and he will bless it in his ways. Now it is required of slaves that they be found faithful. And so we are, for Jesus's sake. Amen.

John G. Nordling

A Statement by the Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, concerning the Communion of Infants

The issue of infant communion continues to be raised in various contexts within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Because of this, the faculty of CTSFW desires to express its position on this practice.

- We do not advocate the communion of infants, nor is it taught or promoted at CTSFW. No member of the faculty has adopted infant communion as his personal opinion.
- We hold that instruction prior to participation in Holy Communion is necessary. We affirm this hallmark of LCMS communion practice and underscore its importance to our students.
- Since there is not uniform practice in the LCMS concerning when children begin to receive Holy Communion, we instruct our students to be sensitive to the past and current practices of the congregations that they will serve.
- We encourage our students to be aware of and sensitive to the collegial character of LCMS practices (e.g., what other LCMS pastors and congregations are doing with first communion and confirmation of children). On that account, we discourage students from developing practices unique to themselves or their congregations.
- Finally, due to the variety of practices in the LCMS, we see much benefit in working towards a consensus among pastors, congregations, district presidents, and seminary faculties on practices concerning the participation of children in Holy Communion that are faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

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Book Reviews

Review Essay

I Am Not Eloquent; I Am Slow of Speech and of Tongue: Learning to Speak for Marriage

Keeping up with the marriage debate, if there still is one, seems almost impossible. We are living in compressed times, when a day seems like a year, and a year a century. Who could have imagined that when our current president first sought the office, he would have to appear with Rick Warren and offer his endorsement for traditional marriage? That was so long ago; the world is so different now. Young people can hardly imagine a day when homosexual behavior was called sodomy, and same-sex marriage was not only illegal, but unthinkable. Now the tables have turned, and even the strongest of Bible-believing Christians are grasping for ways to articulate the biblical teachings on sexuality and marriage. We recognize that it is necessary to affirm the Scriptures, but we must do more. We cannot leave the impression that marriage is simply a Christian thing, an arbitrary command, or a Levitical Law. We have to demonstrate that God's word is not only the basis of creation, but that it reflects the goodness of creation. We need to be able to demonstrate that God's marriage mandate is actually good for people, because he is a good God and wants the best for us. Marriage matters, and promoting it is an act of love, as well as a confession of the God who loves us in Christ, our Bridegroom. So we need to speak in order to answer the world's questions and to address a world that equates the affirming of natural marriage with hate. Is there any hope? Where can we even begin?

***What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense.* By Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert George. New York: Encounter Books, 2012. 152 pages. Softcover. $15.99.**

Perhaps the place to start is a slim book that packs intellectual punch, co-authored by Princeton professor Robert George and two of his students, Sherif Girgis and Ryan Anderson. Robert George is perhaps the preeminent Christian scholar of our day. His book, *The Conscience and Its Enemies* is a classic in understanding the challenge Christians face from the secular Left. Girgis is largely responsible for the book's arguments, and Ryan for its structure. In the introduction, the authors lay out two definitions of marriage: the conjugal view and the revisionist view. According to the conjugal view, marriage is an exclusive, lifelong, and monogamous union, oriented towards procreation and the raising of children. According to the revisionist view, marriage is essentially an intense emotional bond. In the chapters that follow, the authors lay out the implications of each.

In the first chapter, the authors address the state's interest in regulating marriage. Libertarians are bound to be disappointed. While there are no laws governing friendships, for instance, the state has a compelling interest in marriage, which has traditionally been seen as the best place for a child to grow and thrive. The values of exclusivity, monogamy, and permanence are not simply spiritual values, but are tied to the very act of procreation. Given that every child has a mother and a father, and that only a male and a female can produce a child, the state has a stake in incentivizing and obligating this relationship. In the second chapter, the authors speak about marriage as a comprehensive union. By this, they mean, "It unites two people in their most basic dimensions, in the minds *and* in their bodies; second, it unites them with respect to procreation, family life, and its broad domestic sharing; and third, it unites them permanently and exclusively" (23). Marriage is more than friendship in that it unites all that two persons are and have. And, though friendship might actually be more intense, it need not be exclusive or monogamous. Marriage is a comprehensive union in which two people become biologically one in the act of procreation. Our bodies have many biological systems, including the circulatory system, the respiratory system, and the cardio-vascular system, each an independently functioning system. The reproductive system is different, for is it is whole and functional only in the unity of one male and one female. Together, a man and woman become one in the creation of new life. Such a union calls for permanence, for the sake of the children and for the sake of binding the generations.

In the third chapter, the authors speak to the question of societal good, noting that where marriage thrives, society thrives as well. Marriage is good for children, who are cared for by two devoted parents. It is good for women, who have safety and protection, especially when most vulnerable. Finally, it is good also for men, who find purpose in marriage. As marriage falls apart, children have more social, psychological, and educational difficulties. More women end up in poverty, and men become less productive. In the most basic of terms, marriage "tends to help spouses financially, emotionally, physically, and socially" (44). Studies have shown that marriage makes a people more prosperous, and, as an added benefit, less dependent upon government, which often must step in to fill the void. And, from a Christian standpoint, it is worth noting that when marriage falls apart, the poor are hurt the most. They write: "A leading indicator of whether someone will know poverty or prosperity is whether she knew growing up the love and security of her married mother and father" (45). The breakdown of the family not only hurts the poor, but keeps people in poverty.

People commonly ask, "What harm does gay marriage do to my marriage?" In the fourth chapter, the authors speak to this question by noting how societal norms affect behavior and how the changing of those norms has detrimental consequences. No-fault divorce has perhaps done more damage to society than any other social policy of the twentieth century. Children have been raised in broken homes, and women have been made vulnerable. With the advent of gay marriage, the very definition of marriage is changed, and the values of permanence, exclusivity, and monogamy are no longer organically tied to the institution. Within the gay community, for instance, exclusivity is not a widely held ideal, and over half of gay marriages incorporate multiple partners. For evidence of this, the authors cite stories from the *New York Times*. Now, some four years later, the evidence has only been further confirmed. As marriage is redefined, societal norms have less meaning. They conclude, "So there is no reason to believe, and abundant reason to doubt, that redefining marriage would make people more likely to abide by its norms" (72). As gay marriage has become the law of the land, so also have many pushed not only for polygamy, but also polyamory and temporary marriage. Gay marriage is not simply marriage expanded, but it is marriage redefined, and then, ultimately, undefined.

The strength of *What Is Marriage* is that, having read it, you are prepared to answer almost every question that has been raised in objection. Some ask: if marriage is oriented towards children, what about infertile couples? The authors note that it is rare for both husband and wife to be sterile, and as such marriage is aimed at keeping partners from having children outside of the marital union. Even more, a faithful couple, whether they have children or not, strengthen marriage as an institution, and therefore society. Both good and bad behavior is societally contagious. Divorce is never a solitary act. The more people in a community who get divorced, the more divorce becomes common, and the weaker the value of permanence becomes. Likewise, the authors do a good job of debunking the analogy of gay marriage to interracial marriage. Black or white, we are the same in essence and in our shared humanity. Men and women, on the other hand, are different. It takes one of each to bring a child into the world.

Even more, there is no such thing as generic parenting. Only a woman can be a mother and only a man can be a father, and a child needs both.

Conjugal Union: What Marriage Is and Why It Matters. **By Patrick Lee and Robert P. George. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. 152 pages. Softcover. $22.99.**

The next book on our list, *Conjugal Union*, also has Robert P. George as one its authors, this time alongside Patrick Lee, Professor of Bioethics at the Franciscan University of Steubenville. This work is perhaps harder hitting, and it goes more deeply into the question of marriage. This is a deeply rewarding read, but not an easy one, and would be well suited for a graduate level seminar. The authors first note the crisis in marriage as an institution, noting the high divorce rate, the common practice of cohabitation, the growing disconnect between child-rearing and marriage, and the redefinition of marriage as primarily an emotional bond between two people. The authors then proceed to argue that marriage is a conjugal union "that men and women can choose to enter but whose structure they cannot alter" (7). Marriage means something. This is indeed an important starting point. I think especially of the tendency, even among Christians, to have destination weddings, and for couples to write their own vows. Such practices have a tendency to promote the notion that marriage is simply what a couple makes of it, a relationship created by the needs and desires of each couple. For too long many have thought of marriage as a contract, or perhaps seen it only in terms of the vows each spouse makes towards the other. As weddings move outside of the church, people have lost sight of the fact that it is God who creates the union of man and wife. But again, this is not a religious book. The arguments do not depend on Scripture. George and Lee argue that marriage has true meaning, and that it can be found in nature itself.

Conjugal Union begins with a deep consideration of the relationship between our human nature and morality. The argument here is dense and may take two or three readings to appreciate fully. In it, they argue that human flourishing depends on basic human goods, but that those goods are not to be equated simply with pleasure or the pursuit of happiness. As the authors put it, "a morally good choice is one that is in accord with the human good integrally understood, that is, a love and respect for all of the basic human goods, both in oneself and in others; a morally bad choice, in one way or another, *diminishes* or *suppresses* openness or respect for the intrinsic goods of persons" (53). This means that our choices must be based on something more than the perceived consequences of our actions, a philosophy the authors explain as consequentialism.

Having set the table with the discussion of morality and ethics, the authors approach the basic question of "What marriage is." Specifically, the authors ask whether child-rearing is intrinsically related to marriage, or whether it is only incidental. Alongside this question then is whether marriage describes a specific reality, or whether it is only a social construct. Here George and Lee speak of marriage as a relationship in which a man and a woman are joined together physically, emotionally, and spiritually, "in the kind of community that would be fulfilled by conceiving and rearing children together" (41). Thus, marriage is more than cohabitation, in which a child, if conceived, is incidental to the couple's desire, so that "the members in this relationship must then decide whether they will or will not form a new kind of union, one especially apt for and fulfilled by procreation" (43). While living together involves a man and a woman, and can result in the birth of a child, the inherent qualities of marriage—namely, exclusivity, monogamy, and permanence—are not givens in cohabitation. A couple may choose to raise a child cooperatively, but that decision is based upon the will of the couple, not the nature of the relationship. Within marriage, a child is recognized as "a *gift* that supervenes on the embodiment of the spouses' marital love, not a *product* of the spouses' efficient activity" (48). This point is huge, especially as we try to enliven the imagination of our people. The secular Left speaks of reproduction, and we too easily buy into this language. But, of course, a child is not a product, nor are we the factories. Better, perhaps, to draw upon the language of procreation, recognizing that within marriage, a child is a gift, naturally given through the type of relationship that marriage is in its essence. Marriage is like and unlike other relationships. The authors write:

> Marriage requires a definite structure and stability principally because of its orientation to having and rearing children, and so it must be a sharing of lives, and a long-term interpersonal community valued for its own sake, lest children be viewed as mere products. And because it requires stability, it can begin only with explicit, mutual, and usually public consent. (49)

Those who are pro-life should take notice. A deficient view of marriage inevitably colors the way we view children, and whether we see them as individual gifts from God or else as products—even byproducts—of our other largely selfish desires. And, it should be noted, true marriage in no way excludes or denigrates the infertile couple. Theirs too is a "bodily, emotional, and spiritual union of precisely the sort that would be naturally fulfilled by procreation and the rearing of children together—even though in their case that fulfillment is not reached" (53). All of this is to say, marriage is not a societal construct, but the values of permanence, exclusivity and monogamy are intrinsically linked to the institution as a community oriented to children and their raising.

Conjugal Union then moves into the subject of sex outside of marriage. Here the authors note that sex outside of marriage, or purely for pleasure, works against the common good of marriage. They write, "If one has chosen adultery, that willingness to have sex with someone other than one's wife remains unless it is repented. But a willingness to have sex with someone to whom one is not married in incompatible with the exclusive giving of oneself that is involved in embodying one's marriage" (70). The authors then proceed to speak of sodomy, a word that seems almost to have been written out of the English lexicon. This chapter, due to both its content and dense style, is not an easy read, but it is worthwhile. They write, "In sum, a sexual act can be a way of building up a personal communion only if it is sharing in a genuine good—that would be the common good of the participants' act" (81). For far too long, we have left this type of thinking to the traditions of Catholicism, but, given our culture, it may be time to think more deeply, even as Lee and George lead the way.

Finally, George and Lee address the matter of "Marriage and the Law." In Christian and socially conservative circles, there has been a movement to claim that marriage is a private matter, or perhaps only a churchly matter. Therefore, the thinking goes, gay marriage does not matter because marriage cannot be defined by the state to begin with. But Lee and George allow us no retreat. Marriage comes before the state and is no mere social contract, but "a distinct and irreducible basic human good" (98). Marriage and family are the basis of the community and then the state, not the other way around. However, that does not mean that marriage can be privatized. Marriage is "a public act, involving a public acknowledgement and celebration" (104). The state's laws and policies help to shape the marriage culture. The state has a vested interest in promoting true marriage, as it is the least intrusive way to care for the next generation. At its most basic level, "real marriage *does* perform the absolutely crucial social function of encouraging fathers to commit to their children and the mothers of their children and to fulfill their moral responsibilities to them" (109). Property, inheritance, and child custody are matters to which the state must attend.

Much more could be said of *Conjugal Union*, but no review can do it justice. The book requires reading and rereading, and, for some of us, rereading again. For those interested in the marriage debates, this book is more than worth a place on one's shelf, though it would probably not lend itself to the average book club.

Defending Marriage: Twelve Arguments for Sanity. **By Anthony Esolen. Charlotte, NC: Saint Benedict Press, 2014. 186 pages. Softcover. $14.95.**

In the quest for something more accessible that might even spur on the imagination, Anthony Esolan's *Defending Marriage* is an excellent choice. In this short but rich work, Esolan wakes up the echoes of the past, that we might see marriage, true marriage, in all its beauty. Esolan's work is not explicitly biblical, though it surely draws from the wellspring of Christian imagination. The book is organized around twelve arguments based upon our common humanity, in the hope of restoring societal sanity. Each chapter begins almost poetically, either asking us to imagine a scene from life or drawing upon a work of literature. In the first chapter, Esolan lays bare for us modern sexuality and shows how much we have lost. In particular, he describes the effects of the sexual revolution, which "has scorched us all, and has made it nearly impossible to understand the goodness of purity, in both its masculine and feminine embodiments" (3). He compares our moral landscape to a culture that has strangely forgotten "the use of the wheel and axle" (4). We have turned into a people who no longer appreciate one another, but simply use one another for pleasure, which leads to the deflation of our humanity, and, ultimately and strangely enough, boredom. Sex has been mechanized, marriage marginalized, and humanity diminished. Esolan then urges us, as if living among the ruins, to begin the process of rebuilding.

In the second chapter, Esolan warns of an ethic of sexual autonomy, that in fact leads to isolation and brokenness. In the third, beginning with a Norman Rockwell illustration, he paints a wonderful picture of the differences between male and female that should be celebrated and that gives life its wholeness. He then moves to speak about chastity and modesty as positive virtues, explaining that it is not about saying no but about embracing life to its fullest; it is not about being on a diet of restriction, but enjoying the feast of life at its best.

The fifth chapter may hit home with many, as it speaks of the need for friendship and explains how the sexual revolution coupled with same-sex marriage have damaged our capacity for friendship. Men have long since abandoned clubs, and close personal bonds between men have suffered, resulting in what is an epidemic of loneliness. In order to avoid the stigma of homosexuality, men have too often retreated to their man caves, to depressing effect. In the next chapter, Esolan takes on the notion of consensual sex as harmless, demonstrating its deleterious effects. Our divorce culture has shattered so many lives, while prostitution and pornography have made our hearts callous. He also notes that when we normalize abnormal behavior, the behavior that is normal and beneficial becomes suspect and marginalized. Once, for instance, incest is in any way allowed, then every family relation is affected. When homosexuality is normalized, every friendship becomes suspect. He goes on to note that normalizing abnormal behavior hurts those who engage in it, much like inviting an alcoholic to live in a liquor store. There is much more to say about Esolan's arguments, but they are more than arguments, and they are best captured by reading his book. The last chapter is perhaps the most hopeful and inspiring. We might compare it to C.S. Lewis's Narnia, a vision of what could be in what he calls "the Country of Marriage." He speaks of a world in which men and women cherish one another, people live in a positive and cheerful purity, and in which the residents no longer pursue happiness, because happiness pursues them. Yes, this may sound too sweet, almost sugary, but it is not. It is the description of a happy home, a better way of life, and one, even in our sin-soaked world, worth pursuing.

Esolan's work would make a great read for any book club. In fact, it would be especially good for a men's club at church; perhaps it could be read in bite-sized portions, over the course of the year. This is more than a book about gay marriage. It is a book of our shared humanity and recovering what has been lost. Like me, you will find yourself nodding your head, as you know what he says is right, even as you had not yet thought of it. This is a book to treasure, to read and reread, and hopefully to capture and enliven the imagination.

***Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom.* By Ryan T. Anderson. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2015. 256 pages. Softcover. $16.99.**

Most recently, Ryan T. Anderson has authored his own work, *Truth Overruled*. Perhaps there has been no greater public champion of marriage than Anderson, whose style and personality is bright, positive, and clear. The book's title should alert us to the new reality that gay marriage is not simply a step in the wrong direction, but something that will affect all Christians who still hold to traditional marriage. While gay marriage laws are certainly bad for society and harmful to children, another more sinister factor is at play. The Supreme Court's *Obergefell* ruling has not only made gay marriage the law of the land, but now placed traditional Christians into the role of haters, the modern-day equivalent to racists of former days. The question ahead is whether there will be a place in society for people of faith and conscience. Here and there, the persecution has already begun. Perhaps even worse than persecution, many Christians have bought into the idea that gay marriage is a good and loving option, and in doing so, they deny the plain teaching of Scripture and place their own faith in danger. For far too long, our children have been indoctrinated with the gay agenda and think that gay marriage, even if not essentially good, does no harm. For Christians in doubt, this book is a must-read.

In the first chapter, Anderson again defines marriage, beginning with two alternative views, the "Consent-Based" view of marriage, and the "Comprehensive View." Anderson refers to marriage as "A Marital Community," a "union of hearts, minds, and bodies" (19). Marriage is oriented towards a "comprehensive good—the procreation and education of new persons who can appreciate goodness in all its dimensions. Marriage is unlike any other community in being comprehensive" (21). As we have seen in the other books, marital values of permanence, exclusivity, and monogamy are not incidental to marriage but arise out of its very nature. Anderson then proceeds to show how marriage works in society, explaining that there is no such thing as parenting, but rather mothers and fathers who each play a unique and irreplaceable role. This reminds me of past parenting experiments, in which, for instance, boys were given dolls to play with in the hopes of making them more sensitive. What happened then? The boys turned the dolls into swords. That is to say, boys and girls are different, as are men and women. For a balanced emotional and psychological diet, a child does best with a mom and a dad. While circumstances sometimes make this impossible, gay marriage intentionally deprives a child of either a mom or dad, and children consequently suffer.

Chapter 3 is centered on "Judicial Tyranny." In this chapter, Anderson analyzes the Supreme Court's ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. It is important to read this chapter because it lays bare the illegitimacy of the court's ruling. Justice Kennedy claims that the Constitution guarantees the liberty of individuals to "define and express their identity" (62). Anderson ably dismantles Kennedy's loose reasoning and also draws from the dissents of justices Thomas, Scalia, Roberts and Alito. Anyone who reads this chapter will be well-equipped to make the case against gay marriage.

Anderson then continues by telling the story of those who have suffered persecution for their marriage beliefs in the chapter "Bake Me a Cake, Bigot!" Gay marriage has already left a long list of casualties, including Christian adoption agencies, schools, and charities. Now it is businesses that are under the gun, Anderson relates the stories of "Sweet Cakes by Melissa" and Arlene's Flowers, owned by Baronelle Stutzman. Stutzman, a florist in the state of Washington, hired gay workers and happily served gay customers for years. But when she refused to provide flowers for the wedding of two gay friends, "because of my relationship with Jesus Christ," it was the state attorney general who intervened and fined Stutzman (97). At present, Stutzman is still fighting to save her property from government seizure. These stories are key. These are good people, most often devout Christians, who want to live their lives in kindness to others, even while they conduct their businesses according to their belief. In case after case, these Christians would serve any gay person, discriminating against no one, but they simply do not want to use their talents to celebrate that which is sin. Real people are suffering, and Anderson urges us to stand with them, and speak for them. Indeed, we should not assume that somehow everything will be all right. Gay marriage will affect counselors, teachers, and people in all walks of life. Anderson, for instance, tells the story of Brendan Eich, the former CEO of Mozilla, who was fired simply for supporting a traditional marriage initiative in California, an initiative that passed. He likewise tells the story of Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran, who was fired for having written a book on traditional marriage.

Ryan champions religious freedom as a basic human right. Christians should not be shy to note that in our nation's Bill of Rights the free exercise of religion is asserted in the First Amendment. He tells a devastating story of how Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) came under attack and how the state's leaders folded under the pressure. Anderson writes not out of despair, but to encourage us to stand up for what is right. Bullies win and are emboldened when unopposed.

Perhaps the most helpful chapter is entitled "Why Sexual Orientation Is Not Like Race." Too many of our young people have bought into this notion, as have many of us. People in our congregations are afraid of being labeled bigots, and many agree that opposition to gay marriage is in fact bigotry. Men and women, however, are indeed essentially different. We are equal, but so also are we complementary. Men and women, moms and dads, are both necessary, and we should not be ashamed to celebrate these differences, even as a child needs both a mom and a dad.

Finally, Anderson urges us not to lose heart, but to take the long view. We must stand up and speak up and make the case that marriage is good. We must make our case in a winsome way, but make it we must. Too much is at stake. He offers three practical tactics: "1. We must call the court's ruling in *Obergefell* what it is: judicial activism. 2. We must protect our freedom to speak and live according to the truth about marriage. 3. We must redouble our efforts to make the case for it in the public square" (200).

Slow of Speech and Tongue: Finding Our Voice for Marriage

When our Lord spoke from the burning bush, he called Moses to speak to Israel. The great prophet replied, "I am not eloquent," and added, "I am slow of speech and of tongue" (Exod 4:10). This may be the way many of us feel when facing the issue of gay marriage. Many may be afraid, and many may indeed feel tongue-tied. But the time for silence is over. Now we must find our voice and begin to speak the truth of marriage to our friends, families, and neighbors. We must also support those who take a public stand. It can be very distressing when basic truths are denied. On the other hand, it can also be invigorating, a time for rediscovery. For too long, perhaps, we have simply taken marriage for granted. We know instinctively that it matters, but perhaps we have forgotten how to speak about it. Or perhaps, without even realizing it, we have bought into the thinking of the secularism that surrounds us. Certainly, divorce and co-habitation are common among us, and there is plenty for all of us to think about. Repentance is always in order. But, we need not lose hope. We have at our fingertips the way forward. We need to open up our Bibles and rediscover the role that marriage plays throughout the Scriptures, from beginning to end. Then we need to show that our biblical faith is grounded in the reality of creation. And we need to arm ourselves with every resource that supports these biblical truths, including the four wonderful books reviewed in this essay. Each can be ordered online at quite reasonable prices. We need to build up our libraries, at church and at home. And we need to read together.

This is not some abstract argument, but it is a fight for the very goodness of our creator and the care of our children. It may get worse before it gets better. Christians will pay the price for their conviction. Some have been fined, lost their jobs, or run out of business. Others have been sent to jail. We all must wonder whether God will give us the courage to stand in the days ahead. My greatest fear, though, is not persecution, but apathy, that our people will simply cease to care. If we are silent on marriage, we will have become ashamed of the God of our creation, and ashamed of Jesus who taught that marriage is between one man and one woman—the very Lord who offered his life as the dowry of our salvation. My second concern is for younger Christians. How many of our children will attend our churches if they think that we promote what society calls hate? We need to arm ourselves and our children for the battle.

What we have seen in these books is that marriage is a created good. This should not surprise us. The Book of Genesis begins with the complementary creation of Adam and Eve, and from that one flesh union flows forth the procreation of all the children of the earth. The Bible confirms that we have been made for one another to do together what none of us can do alone. Throughout the biblical narrative, we see that when marriage goes wrong, as in polygamy, chaos ensues. While it is manifestly true that God brings good even out of the chaos, Christ himself confirms the original intent of marriage (Matthew 19; Mark 10).

Marriage is indeed a picture, even in the fallen world, of paradise, a glimpse of the hope we have in Christ. Matthew explicitly calls the birth of Jesus a new "Genesis" (Matt 1:1), for in Christ, there is a new creation. And indeed, Christ is the new Adam, and the true groom for his bride, the church. When we as Christians stand for true marriage, we honor God as our creator, the one who made us male and female, and we celebrate the gift of life, which comes from the one flesh union. Even more, when we Christians honor marriage as God intended, we offer a witness to Christ as bridegroom who laid down his life for the church and who promises us a seat at the wedding banquet. Marriage is hardly incidental to our lives as Christians, but it is the source of life and the new life. Now is not the time to back down, but to stand up, speak up, and be proud, saying that our God is good. This does not mean that we are proud of ourselves, for we must all repent as we return to the Lord. But we must not let our sin silence us. In fact, we should be all the bolder. Marriage points us to Christ, who "loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle in any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:25–26). When we confess the truth of marriage, we recognize not only our sin but speak of Christ our Savior. Now is the time to stand with those who are persecuted and to honor those whose conscience is tied to Christ. In all of this, we can be of good courage and good cheer, for Christ is with us. And as Christ made the deaf to hear and the mute to speak, there is no reason to be tongue-tied. In Christ, our tongues have been loosed to sing the praises of our Bridegroom.

Peter J. Scaer

***Outline of Christian Doctrine: An Evangelical Dogmatics*. By Wilfried Härle. Translated by Ruth Yule and Nicholas Sagovsky. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015. 603 pages. Softcover. $50.00.**

Long used as a standard university text for the study of Protestant theology in Germany, this volume is a comprehensive handbook by Wilfried Härle, professor emeritus of systematic theology at Heidelberg. Nearly a third of the book is devoted to the topic of prolegomena, taking up questions such as the nature of theology as a science, the relationship of theology to dogma and the church's confession, as well as classical epistemological issues. This section is carefully structured and is inclusive in scope, laying out a variety of approaches to classical and contemporary topics as the author attempts to make a case for his own position. In many ways, this long introduction (nearly 200 pages) is the most valuable part of the book.

What most theologians would call "worldview" is identified as "lifeworld" by Härle, something he sees as a situational description of the context for human life, action, and thought. Theology, he argues, cannot be done apart from the particularity of the "lifeworld," yet he judges a "contextual theology" that allows the lifeworld to function authoritatively on the same level as the Bible and the church's confessions as problematic. In other words, the "context" can never become the "text" for the Christian faith (see 149–151).

It is only in chapter 8 that Härle takes up the topic of "the being of God." Here he proceeds to discuss God's essence as love. While he seeks to avoid any kind of sentimentalism in reference to God's love as "friendliness" or "being nice" (205), it is not clear whether he avoids the pitfall Bonhoeffer once identified as the error of modern theology that lets love define God rather than God define love. The attributes of God are descripttively presented using both classical writers and contemporary thinkers (e.g., Tillich, Bultmann, Pannenburg, etc).

God's self-disclosure is seen in Jesus. Christology for Härle begins with the evangelical message of Jesus. Hence, Christology cannot be independent of the historical person of Christ:

> If this relationship to a concrete person were to be abandoned or declared nonessential, so that, for example, the origin of the Christian faith were attributed to a fabricated "Christ-myth" (A. Drews), then the Christian faith would not be constituted by the encounter with a person who awakens trust in God. It would be constructed from the

> longing for such an encounter. Such a construct provides no adequate foundation for existence-determining trust. (257)

The virgin birth is seen as the "language of metaphor" (296), and the account of Mary beneath the cross in John 19 is judged to be without historical foundation (298). Härle notes that G. Lüdemann (see his *The Resurrection of Jesus*) legitimately raises historical questions regarding the resurrection but illegitimately claims to know what really happened (i.e., that Jesus' body decayed in the tomb). Also problematic is Härle's use of God's "modes of being" to describe the persons of the Trinity.

The sacraments are described as "sensory signs." Infant Baptism is affirmed, even as Härle is cognizant of criticisms of the practice from the perspective of Karl Barth. His discussion of the Lord's Supper is indebted to the categories of the *Leuenberg Agreement* (1973). Eschatologically, Härle leans toward a speculative universalism.

Insofar as Härle writes descriptively of Christian doctrine, he provides the reader with a significant amount of data exegetically and from the perspective of the history of dogma. To that degree, *Outline of Christian Doctrine* is a helpful handbook for theologians, but it falls far short of qualifying as a Lutheran dogmatics.

John T. Pless

***From Here to Maturity: Overcoming the Juvenilization of American Christianity*. By Thomas Bergler. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014. 192 pages. Softcover. $20.00.**

Thomas Bergler's prior volume, *The Juvenilization of American Christianity,* details how youth ministries have for many years dumbed down the spiritual formation of youth in churches and helped to foster a church-wide shallowness. This "juvenilization" took the form of entertainment based worship, individualistic piety, and a pushing aside of serious doctrinal and Biblical content for the sake of reaching people. Bergler asserts that this process was outwardly successful in drawing in youth. But it led to other destructive consequences such as egocentric practices, a stress on a personal relationship with God, sentiments that act as certainty of a relationship with God, and a strong tilt toward practicality.

This current volume seeks to answer the comment that it is easier to criticize the "Juvenilization of American Christianity" than it is to fix it. Bergler seeks to give congregations help in avoiding turning out perpetual adolescent Christians and to "help church leaders looking to foster maturity in their congregations" (xiii). Building a practical, workable way to reverse a cultural avalanche is no easy task. But it is an important one.

Lutherans will find some matters to disagree with in Bergler's approach. He goes about his work in a broad, almost nondenominational way so as to be the most help for the most number of church leaders and congregations. The Lutheran reader must do a lot of Lutheran translating of content and philosophy. The book is heavy on sanctification, which is not surprising given that "spiritual maturity" involves much sanctification. More troubling is his failure to adequately define and account for the reality for original sin in the life of a Christian. Bergler also has trouble coming up with a clear statement of the gospel—what it is the church is trying to communicate to her members.

However, the book does carry some merit. The attempt to harness research and methodology to push American churches toward a more rigorous approach to youth ministry and serious growth in the Christian life is welcome. The listing of various assets or qualities (88–90) a congregation can foster to facilitate spiritual maturity is a helpful and challenging list for any church leader. This volume is a practical collection of suggestions. Many are beneficial. Some are not. But the aim is laudable: to combat in a hands-on way the shallowness of much of contemporary Christian life.

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***Deuteronomy*. By Jack R. Lundbom. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013. 1064 pages. Softcover. $80.00.**

Perhaps most widely known for his three-volume Anchor Bible commentary on Jeremiah (1999–2004), Jack Lundbom has since taken his enviable skillset to the book of Deuteronomy and has produced what will undoubtedly serve as a benchmark in Deuteronomy studies for many years to come.

It does not take long to realize that Lundbom's expertise is wide-ranging. His translations are enlightening, and his textual notes often draw upon Semitic philology. As a master of rhetorical criticism, he showcases each pericope's literary structure before commenting on individual verses. If there is a chiasm to be noted in Deuteronomy, Lundbom has found it. He also incorporates an impressive array of Ancient Near Eastern material into his exegesis without overlooking the important insights of premodern interpretation. (It was nice to see Luther referenced here and there.) Three excursuses—"Centralized Worship in the Reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah," "Divorce within Judaism and Early Christianity," and "History of Research into the Song of Moses"—add more value to an already monumental work. In the end, I would say that Lundbom's frequent recourse to Jeremiah when expositing Deuteronomy is the commentary's most edifying ingredient.

One does wonder, however, if Lundbom's sustained focus on the book's conjectured seventh-century audience tends to muffle Deuteronomy as Christian Scripture. To insist, for example, that "we must . . . rule out any inherent messianism in [Deut. 18:15] . . ." (557) is to privilege a historically reconstructed authorial intent over any deeper intentionality operating under God's providential care that would inhere all the same. Those seeking prefigurements of Christ, in other words, are left with some work to do.

Even so, Lundbom's commentary is largely unsurpassed, and it is rightly heralded as the long-awaited successor to S.R. Driver's great contribution back in 1895.

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***Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World.* Edited by Bob Kellemen and Jeff Forrey. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 480 pages. Hardcover. $32.99.**

As a part of many other books produced by the Biblical Counseling Coalition (BCC), *Scripture and Counseling* continues with the theological premise that the doctrine of human depravity cannot be reconciled with the ethos of self-esteem. All of the contributors to this volume approach Holy Scripture as being authoritative in all things and view the application of the same to be an integral part of their counseling with Christians, their main clients.

The two subjects in the book on which the contributors focused were: "How We *View* the Bible for Life in a Broken World" and "How We *Use* the Bible for Life in a Broken World." Following these sections are three summary appendices concerning the Biblical Counseling Coalition: 1) their

Mission, Vision, and Passion Statement, 2) their Confessional Statement, and 3) their Doctrinal Statement.

Obviously the contributors practice a scriptural application from a Reformed viewpoint. However, the basis for a scriptural view of counseling, which is defined in this compilation of articles, will be found to be very helpful to all pastors. Applying God's law and gospel in a counseling setting is as much of an art as is the proclamation of the same in the Divine Service. And, just as the pastor needs to know his people in order to faithfully carry out that same proclamation in the Divine Service, so will the pastor need to listen to and know his parishioner when he comes to him for counsel and scriptural guidance.

Finally, the examples offered by the contributors are very applicable to all parish pastors. Overall, this volume will be appreciated by those who wrestle with the beneficial, as opposed to the injurious, ways in which God's Word is handled.

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***The Early Luther: Stages in a Reformation Reorientation*. By Berndt Hamm. Translated by Martin J. Lohrmann. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013. 320 pages. Softcover. $36.00.**

Berndt Hamm, professor emeritus of modern church history at Erlangen, brings to bear his immersion in late medieval theological texts to clarify Luther's relation to the tradition and the significant shifts that occur in his early career. While much of twentieth-century Luther research has focused on the young Luther (see Bainton, Boehmer, and Rupp, for example), Hamm has focused on theological ferment in Luther from his entrance into the monastery through his early exposition of the Scriptures in the Psalms and Romans lectures, to his writing of the Ninety-Five Theses in 1517, and culminating in *The Freedom of a Christian* in 1520.

There are several features of Hamm's book that commend it for careful study as we approach the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Hamm demonstrates that Luther slowly but perceptibly moved from the medieval notion of salvation by love to the conviction that the certainty of salvation is found in faith alone. This shift yields a very different understanding of repentance. While Hamm avoids pinning Luther's "evangelical breakthrough" to a particular event, he prefers instead to see multiple points of change in Luther's thinking in the earlier part of his career, with each being not so much a gradual unfolding, but something "qualitatively and surprisingly new" (109). Following in the footsteps of his teacher Heiko Oberman, he argues that Luther cannot be fully or rightly understood apart from his medieval context. Yet when viewed against the backdrop of medieval thought and church life, the radical nature of Luther's new orientation will shine with even greater clarity. Hamm traces the trajectory of this shift in his treatment of the Ninety-Five Theses as a text expressing Luther's early theology of repentance (in chapter 5). In light of the upcoming anniversary, this chapter will be exceedingly significant in setting out what was accomplished theologically in the Theses and what yet remained to be done in the Reformation.

A chapter devoted to Luther's pastoral care of the dying demonstrates the impact of Luther's theology on everyday matters of life and death. Here Hamm provides an analysis of Luther's 1519 "Sermon on Preparing to Die" (AE 42:99–115), showing how the Reformer brings an end to the traditional medieval *ars moriendi* with the eschatological finality of justification. Faith in Christ alleviates the burden of uncertainty in the face of death so that the believer can approach death as a birth into a new and heavenly life. For Luther, the metaphor of birth also provided imagery to reckon with fear and crisis created by the narrow passage from this life to the next. Hamm observes, "This double-sidedness of fearful terror and comforting joy defines the composition of his sermon, just as it is characteristic of the overall structure of his theology then and later. For him, comfort always meant a 'comforted despair'" (131).

How Luther comes to understand and embrace evangelical freedom is the theme of chapter 6. Hamm contends that "[i]t was the discovery of people's freedom from themselves" (170) and thus a freedom for God and the neighbor. "Freedom from the Pope and Pastoral Care to the Pope" (chapter 7) is a fine commentary on Luther's essay, "The Freedom of a Christian," demonstrating the Reformer's pastoral polemic that sought to both critique the papacy and address the liberating and consoling gospel to Leo X.

Hamm's treatment of Luther's contested relationship to the mysticism of the Middle Ages is as rich as it is nuanced. He clearly delineates variegated forms of mystical theology in this period and persuasively argues that Luther's mysticism was a "broken" mysticism, for it provided no "Christian possibility for the innermost soul to gain immediate mystical contact with the hidden secrets of God" (222). Hamm contends that "[n]o theologian or mystic before him had stressed the gap between God and the creature as sharply as he did" (227). Hamm's discussion of the internality and externality of faith in Luther's thinking is particularly helpful

A final chapter, "Justification by Faith Alone: A Profile of the Reformation Doctrine of Justification" was originally delivered to a pastoral conference at the Castle Coburg in November 2009. In this essay, Hamm asserts the continuing vitality of Luther's proclamation of God's justification of the ungodly. Here we learn that Luther's theology of grace was no "gift exchange," no giving and then giving back that would leave room for merit in human response. Luther's view "broke away from the contentious spectrum of late medieval doctrines" and this is "why traditional Catholics viewed the Reformation's 'justification by faith alone' as intolerable and heretical" (237).

All in all, *The Early Luther: Stages in Reformation Reorientation* is an insightful and historically anchored treatment of Luther's theological development. It would be a good book for pastors to read and study in light of the upcoming anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

John T. Pless

***Infant Baptism in Nineteenth Century Lutheran Theology*. By David P. Scaer. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011. 224 pages. Softcover. $37.99.**

There were times on both sides of the Atlantic when it was rather unusual for dissertations to appear in print to be made available for purchase by the general public. Researchers at the time had to take recourse to the few type-written copies available at university libraries. There is bound to be some treasure hidden away on library shelves. This is confirmed in the case of the St. Louis dissertation of the long-time Fort Wayne Professor of Systematic Theology, David P. Scaer, which first now, fifty years after its completion, is published in a revised form.

The study investigates the following question: What rationale did nineteenth-century German-speaking Lutheran theology provide for infant baptism in view of the fact that, contrary to the Lutheran doctrinal tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the faith of infants (*fides infantium*) taught by Luther was no longer upheld? While only a minority—including Löhe, Walther, Philippi, and Pieper—returned to Luther's view, most Lutheran theologians at the time distanced themselves from the doctrine concerning the faith of infants. Yet this raises the question as to how—in view of the indivisible link between Baptism and faith—the Baptism of children before the age of reason could be justified by Lutheran theologians.

Scaer pursues a chronological order in his review of the attempts to answer this question as he finds them in monographs addressing this issue specifically and in doctrinal textbooks. He begins with the late rationalistic theology of the Enlightenment. A second chapter is dedicated to the Reformed theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, while the next two chapters examine the early and late Erlangen theology of the nineteenth century. Scaer turns to Ernst Bunke (1866–1944), Reinhold Seeberg (1859–1935), Paul Althaus Sr. (1861–1925), and Hermann Cremer (1834–1903) as representatives of Lutheran theology at the turn of the twentieth century.

Summarizing his findings in his last chapter, the author presents four main points of agreement between the theologians under examination: first, the denial of the faith-creating power of Baptism. Second, the denial of the possibility of the faith of infants. Third, the assumption of an incompleteness of Baptism in the transmission of salvation, requiring a later completion, e.g., by confirmation. Fourth, the soteriological marginalization of Baptism in favor of the church as community of faith, by which the Christian first receives saving faith. The first two points were inherited from rationalism. The third assumption represented the thinking prevalent in Pietism, while the subordination of Baptism as a means of grace under the church was adopted from Schleiermacher.

It is Schleiermacher who establishes as theology's criterion the pious feeling or the subjective "consciousness of faith," not reason as done by rationalism. For him, too, there can be no soteriological rationale for baptizing infants. The Baptism of infants thus becomes an adiaphoron that may be administered if a magical understanding of Baptism is rejected and the necessity of confirmation is maintained.

To be sure, those Erlangen theologians who were interested in a synthesis of tradition and the Enlightenment retained the necessity of infant Baptism; they were unable, however, to overcome the impasse inherited from Schleiermacher's approach. Accordingly, Höfling distinguishes sharply between the imparting of the Spirit worked by Baptism and faith that is rooted in consciousness and allegedly first comes into existence later. Danish bishop Hans Lassen Martensen combines this with a double dichotomy between nature and consciousness, on the one hand, and Baptism and the word, on the other hand. While Baptism aims at the nature of man that does not resist grace, the word is directed at consciousness. It is quite evident here that the fear of a supposed magical misunderstanding of Baptism ultimately leads to a mystical idea of salvation, according to which the possibility of an immediate union between man and God—i.e., one without sacramental mediation—is asserted. Thomasius, von Zezschwitz, Ernst Hory, Rocholl, and Franz Delitzsch are also committed to the double dichotomy observed in Martensen. According to Scaer, in all these proposals the distinction between the inherent effect of Baptism and the reception of its benefits by faith remains underdeveloped. He repeatedly indicates that this leads to an imperceptible approximation to the Roman concept of "nature and grace."

To be sure, at the end of the nineteenth century, Baptism is rediscovered as a means of grace by Ernst Bunke and Reinhold Seeberg. However, they as well as Adolf Schlatter direct the promise given in Baptism not toward faith created by Baptism, but toward some believing that is first developed later, when the rebirth is effected by the word. Paul Althaus, in his dissertation written under Hermann Cremer, explicitly rejects a symbolic understanding of Baptism and views Baptism consistently as God's work and as participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus. However, his understanding of faith remains deficient, because he defines it synergistically as the person's active participation in the appropriation of salvation. It is first Hermann Cremer who gets closest to Luther's understanding of Baptism, as he, in the new edition of his book on baptism (1901), emphasizes the completeness of the mediation of salvation and consistently links Baptism and faith, without fully grasping the Lutheran understanding of faith as trust (*fiducia*).

Scaer's own criteriology is based on the distinction between the objective character of the essence of baptism and the subjective character of its effect. To be sure, faith, as trust in God's promise, does indeed have a subjective aspect. However, one must ask whether the consistent distinction between God's saving work by baptism and the radical receptivity of man in faith—in the dialectic of law and gospel, judgment of the sinner and rebirth of the redeemed believer—could be even more helpful on the path toward overcoming the rationalist and pietistic errors of the nineteenth century that overshadow the biblical understanding of Baptism that re-emerged during the Reformation. As far as faith is concerned, its pure receptivity ought to be emphasized then, not so much its subjective nature. Scaer himself made this point in his great and equally recommended monograph on Baptism, where he, referring to Francis Pieper's *Christian*

Dogmatics, writes: "Moreover, we know that Baptism as Gospel itself has the power to work the faith it calls for."[1]

Scaer's work closes an important gap as it pertains to the study of the German-speaking Lutheran theology of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, he deals with questions that are probably being discussed in all Lutheran churches to this day. To be sure, Baptism superficially appears to be "the unproblematic sacrament," a view that is supported by ecumenical agreements of mutual recognition of Baptism performed in a number of churches. However, every church practicing infant Baptism has to struggle with the fact that it sometimes becomes doubtful for individual parishioners, to the point of some being seduced to deny their infant Baptism by letting themselves be baptized again. This is not the only reason as to why the greatest care should be taken in the theology of Baptism for the sake of a thorough instruction in Baptism on the basis of the biblical theology of the Reformation. David Scaer has rendered important services when it comes to exercising this care.

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***The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Tradition: An Essay on the Mystical True Presence*. By John W. Riggs. Columbia Series in Reformed Theology. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015. 296 pages. Hardcover. $35.00.**

Having made generous use of Riggs's *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition*, I looked forward to his assessments of what Reformed theologians had to say about the Lord's Supper. I was not disappointed. The first chapter provides a brief but thorough overview of views on the Lord's Supper from Jesus right up to the Reformation (1–33). Riggs begins by analyzing the now popular views of Marxsen and Crossan that the Lord's Supper emerged from Jesus' table fellowship. To provide for the book's chief focus on Reformed theology, he divides the views on the Supper that were proposed in the church's first millennium and a half into two categories, realist or metabolic, in which, as it later becomes evident, Luther belongs and symbolic of which Zwingli belongs. As an alternative to these options,

[1] David P. Scaer, *Baptism*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, vol. 11 (St. Louis: Luther Academy Publishing, 1999), 153.

Riggs offers a middle ground that he calls the nonmetabolic or mystical view exemplified by Calvin, thus the subtitle, "The Mystical True Presence." There is no change in the elements, but Christ is nevertheless really present. Included in this chapter are summaries of how medieval theologians wrestled with how Christ was present in the Sacrament. He presents Thomas Aquinas as holding not to a chemical change in the elements, but to a presence of Christ grasped by the intellect (23–24). Since Reformed scholars claim Luther as one of their own, Riggs finds evidences of the mystical view in the early and late Luther, though he had rejected it in his confrontation with the Enthusiasts (53–54).

Parallel to the text, the endnotes provide an equally fascinating narrative in which the curtain is lifted on what was taking place behind the scenes. For example, Martin Bucer, the catalyst for the 1536 Wittenberg Colloquy, was ecumenically conciliatory to Luther in public but was privately working against him by spreading the views of Karlstadt (199). Riggs describes Bucer as "being just plain duplicitous" (200). Harsh words, indeed! At the beginning of the October 1529 Marburg Colloquy, the Swiss complained about Luther's high-handedness in his insistence that before discussing differences on the Supper their errors on the Trinity, the person of Christ, original sin, justification, and purgatory had to be resolved (183). One scholar calls the accommodation between Zwingli and Luther "eine Scheinkonkordie," a sham agreement (197)—and it was. The reader should note that the colloquy has been used by some Lutherans to show a fundamental agreement with the Reformed, which of course it was not. In reading between the lines, Calvin comes across as a conflicted figure in wanting to be accepted by the heirs of Luther whom he deeply admired, even to the point of subscribing to the Augsburg Confession as Melanchthon understood it (210), but at the same time never detaching himself from the Zwinglians (216).

Riggs moves into the nineteenth century with Schleiermacher, who held that Christians participating in the Supper with other Christians as a community were thereby participating in Christ's body and blood (139). For Barth, a sacrament is a Means of Grace as it serves the proclaimed word and is subservient to it. Some of these views have seeped in among Lutherans. As indicated by the subtitle, "An Essay on the Mystical True Presence," Riggs wants to move away from the widely perceived view that for the Reformed Christ is present only in his word in the sacrament, but he has not achieved this goal. As valuable as learning about the historical distinctions among Reformed theologians may be, they are agreed that Christ's body and blood are not received by the mouth. Since the vast majority of Lutheran and Reformed churches are in eucharistic fellowship with one another, setting forth their differences may be moot, but it helps to be reminded that we started out on different paths, and for some us we still are. Riggs's title calls his work an essay. It is much more than that and is worth acquiring.

David P. Scaer

***The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus*. By Michael F. Bird. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014. 408 pages. Softcover. $30.00.**

Since the eighteenth century, how the words and deeds of Jesus found their way through oral tradition into the Gospels has been front and center in New Testament studies. Bultmann removed the historical Jesus, a move that was countered by his student Ernst Käsemann, and so the search resumed for determining how Jesus' words found their way into the Gospels. How oral tradition was formed and how it was passed on and adjusted is the chief aim of Meyer's work. With good reason Bird suggests that the disciples may have taken notes (45–46), and he builds on the work of Martin Hengel and Richard Bauckham that the Gospels contain eyewitness accounts that were passed on to the evangelists and were intended for public reading in the churches. One has to ask why plausible self-references in Matthew and John do not suggest that these evangelists may have also been witnesses (48–63). This would not preclude that they incorporated materials from other eyewitnesses or that what they wrote was shaped by the environment in which they wrote. Long discredited is Bultmann's distinction between Palestinian and Hellenistic settings in which Jesus' words took form. Memory was a factor in preserving his words.

Bird falls in line with the accepted orthodoxy in Gospel studies that Matthew and Luke used Mark and the reputed Q document, arguing that "Mark's roughness in language is smoothed over by the other two Evangelists" (187). One has to ask if this was really so, and in any event, arguments to determine priority from linguistic style are not foolproof. If Matthew's claim to fame is orderliness, and Luke evidences a literary beauty, Mark excels in sophistication. His placement of Baptism alongside the Lord's Supper in 10:38–39 suggests a sacramental theology not found in Matthew's parallel (20:22–23). Bird takes the reader from how the Gospels were received in the first century to their acceptance in the patristic period. As an added bonus are full-length quotations from the fathers. For the nearly extinct breed of form critics, Bird has provided a delightful corrective, and for those who allow room only for the Holy Spirit in how the Gospels sprang into existence, he brings Jesus and his disciples into the mix. Besides all that, the price is right for such an embracive book in Gospel studies.

David P. Scaer

***Psalms 1–50.* Edited by Craig A. Blaising and Carmen S. Hardin. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture Series: Old Testament VII. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008. 458 pages. Hardcover. $50.00.**

The expressed goal of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture Series (ACCS) is "the revitalization of Christian teaching based on classical Christian exegesis, the intensified study of Scripture by lay persons . . . , and the stimulation of Christian . . . scholars toward further inquiry into scriptural interpretation by ancient Christian writers" (xi). The Psalms make an adequate test case for how and if this threefold goal is met. Interested lay people will benefit from such exposure to the comments of the church fathers. Likewise, the fathers' thought will stimulate scholars of diverse theological disciplines to examine patristic exegesis.

I remain unconvinced, however, that a catenae format, a compilation of quotations, can accomplish the first part of the expressed goal. Christian teaching may be influenced by the ACCS, but can we properly say that this is based on classical Christian exegesis? Exegesis through reception history always runs the risk of artificiality, most definitely when the content is arranged in select quotations without context, linked together with comments of Fathers from different eras and schools of theology. Such a method precludes the goal of establishing Christian teaching on actual classical Christian exegesis.

The volume's introduction presents textual data for the prominent Fathers who comment on the Psalms, but not their individual exegetical approaches. This omission leaves the reader in a bit of a quandary. How do these fathers practice exegesis? What is this classical Christian exegesis on which modern teaching is to build? For example, one can find interpretations representative of each of the meanings in the Augustinian-Catholic fourfold meaning, or *Quadriga* (literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical), yet the catenae format disallows the reader from seeing when or if more than one sense is presented in the original work of a given writer. So the reader is left looking at a modern editor's mosaic of patristic comments rather than a tutorial in patristic exegesis.

Still there is much to be commended in the *Psalms 1–50* volume. Blaising states in the introduction that the early church writers drew on the Psalms for apologetic, doctrinal, and pastoral uses (xvii). Indeed, these are seen throughout the commentary, often working in concert. The pastoral application of the Psalms, functioning alongside their apologetic and doctrinal applications, establishes an orthodoxy that is not cold and dead, but one that comforts, cures, and saves.

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Luther's Theology of Music: Spiritual Beauty and Pleasure. **By Miikka E. Anttila. Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013. 227 pages. Hardcover. $126.00.**

The so-called *new* Finnish School of Luther studies has become associated with a reworking of Luther's doctrine of justification to include not only the forensic imputation of righteousness but also an ontological view of justification with an emphasis on union with God in Christ leading to *apotheosis*. This participatory view of Luther's theology has garnered significant attention and critique.[2] Besides reexamining justification, Finnish Luther studies have also delved into a variety of loci, such as the Trinity, Christology, the sacraments, faith, Luther's anthropology, his theology of the cross, sexuality, and music. All of this has been an attempt of the Lutheran Church in Finland to engage in ecumenical dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church. The volume under review is the latest contribution of the Finnish School revisiting Luther, here at the intersection of music and theology.

Anttila's study provides an invaluable survey of musical theology in antiquity and the Middle Ages. He broadly gleans helpful insights from Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Ignatius of Antioch, Tertullian, the Desert Fathers, Ambrose of Milan, Gregory the Great, and John Chrysostom. Special attention is devoted to Augustine's *De Musica* and *Confessions*. The theologians of the Middle Ages summarized in the research include Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, Jean Gerson, and Johannes Tinctoris. This comprehensive preliminary investigation highlights the important musical heritage in the Western church of which Luther was a member.

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[1] See, for example, Kurt E. Marquart, "Luther and Theosis," *CTQ* 64, no. 3 (2000): 185–205.

In the past century, much research has focused on the relationship between the word and music, with Luther interpreting music in light of his *sola scriptura* principle (e.g., Peter Brunner). While it is impossible to contest that Luther holds a very high view of music, the recent and engaging publication of Miikaa Anttila's *Luther's Theology of Music* calls into question the assumption that music is somehow subservient to the proclamation of the word. Church music does not simply make people "more receptive to the Word of God" (4) or offer a tool for responding to the Word proclaimed by the "preaching office" (5). Rather, Anttilla argues that music is, according to Luther, *Wortförmigkeit* (shaped by the word). As such, music is a God-given tool with the unique ability to create godly pleasure, delight the human heart, and "drive away the devil" (97).

Examining Luther's *On Music,* Psalms commentaries, liturgical writings, catechisms, and Table Talks, Anttila argues that music is above all a gift of God (84–106). Music, like the word of God, is an auditory phenomenon for Luther; Anttila demonstrates that the gospel itself is a "beautiful music" (131) that produces joy and pleasure. At the crux of his argument, Anttila states, "Music is the best form of the Word due to its auditory and affective character. Liberated from the strictly text-based understanding of the Word, music does not compromise the primacy of the Word" (133). Anttila radically proposes that music is a unique and unparalleled *sacramental* union of divine harmony with the word of God.

For this sacramental elevation of music as well as a historical revisionist approach to Luther, Anttila's *Luther's Theology of Music* cannot go without criticism. For example, Anttila's association with the controversial Finnish school is clearly evident. In his conclusion, he argues that justification (and music) can best be understood as "an illumination in which sinners void of light are permeated by God's brightness in Christ so that they become radiant" (198). Conversely, he implies that the legal imagery of the Lutheran Confessions may lead to a somewhat deficient appreciation of musical aesthetics. Furthermore, we would note that Anttila fails to highlight the proclamation of Christ as the source of music's ability to evoke "freedom, pleasantness, and joy" (204). It would seem that Anttila has placed undue stress on music's "sensuous pleasure" (205) in Luther's theology. A robust defense of Christic-theologico-musicology can be found in Catherine Pickstock, "Music: Soul City and Cosmos after Augustine."[3]

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[2] Catherine Pickstock, "Music: Soul City and Cosmos after Augustine," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (New York: Routledge, 2002), 243–277.

Despite these deficiencies, *Luther's Theology of Music: Spiritual Beauty and Pleasure* will be a valuable resource in Luther studies. The lengthy introduction to musico-theology in the Patristic era and the Middle Ages gives a helpful primer to the reformer's place within the Western musical heritage. Unfortunately, the prohibitive cost of this volume will, for the time being, restrict the sphere of Anttila's influence to theological libraries and specialists.

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Books Received

Barclay, John M. G. *Paul & the Gift*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015. 688 pages. Hardcover. $70.00.

Demacopoulos, George E. *Gregory the Great: Ascetic, Pastor, and First Man of Rome*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015. 240 pages. Softcover. $28.00.

Fares, Diego. *The Heart of Pope Francis: How a New Culture of Encounter Is Changing the Church and the World*. Translated by Robert H. Hopcke. New York: A Herder & Herder Book, 2015. 100 pages. Hardcover. $14.95.

Ingram, Paul O. *Living without a Why: Mysticism, Pluralism, and the Way of Grace*. Cambridge: James Clark & Co., 2014. 136 pages. Softcover. $17.00.

Klingbeil, Gerald A., ed. *The Genesis Creation Account and Its Reverberations in the Old Testament*. Berrien Springs, MN: Andrews University Press, 2015. 405 pages. Softcover. $18.49.

Koepp, Joel G. *Who Am I? Non-Suicidal Self Injury and the Differing Perceptions of the "Self."* Wood Lake, MN: Printed by author, 2014. 130 pages. Softcover. $19.50.

Kuruvilla, Abraham. *A Vision for Preaching: Understanding the Heart of Pastoral Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015. 240 pages. Softcover. $21.99.

Loehe, Wilhelm. *The Pastor: The Pastoral Theology of Wilhelm Loehe*. Edited by Charles P. Schaum. Translated by Wolf Dietrich Knappe and Charles P. Schaum. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015. 360 pages. Softcover. $39.99.

Longenecker, Richard N. *Paul, Apostle of Liberty*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015. 435 pages. Softcover. $34.00.

Myres, Alicia D. and Bruce G. Schuchard, eds. *Abiding Words: The Use of Scripture in the Gospel of John*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015. 302 pages. Softcover. $39.95.

Peters, Ted. *Sin Boldly! Justifying Faith for Fragile and Broken Souls*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015. 480 pages. Softcover. $44.00.

Porter, Stanley E. *John, His Gospel, and Jesus: In Pursuit of the Johannine Voice*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015. 309 pages. Softcover. $30.00.

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Sullivan, Scott M. *How to Counter Atheism: A Beginner's Guide to Answering Common Arguments against the Existence of God*. Classical Theist, 2015. CD. $34.00.

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Winter, Bruce W. *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians' Responses*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015. 348 pages. Softcover. $35.00.

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