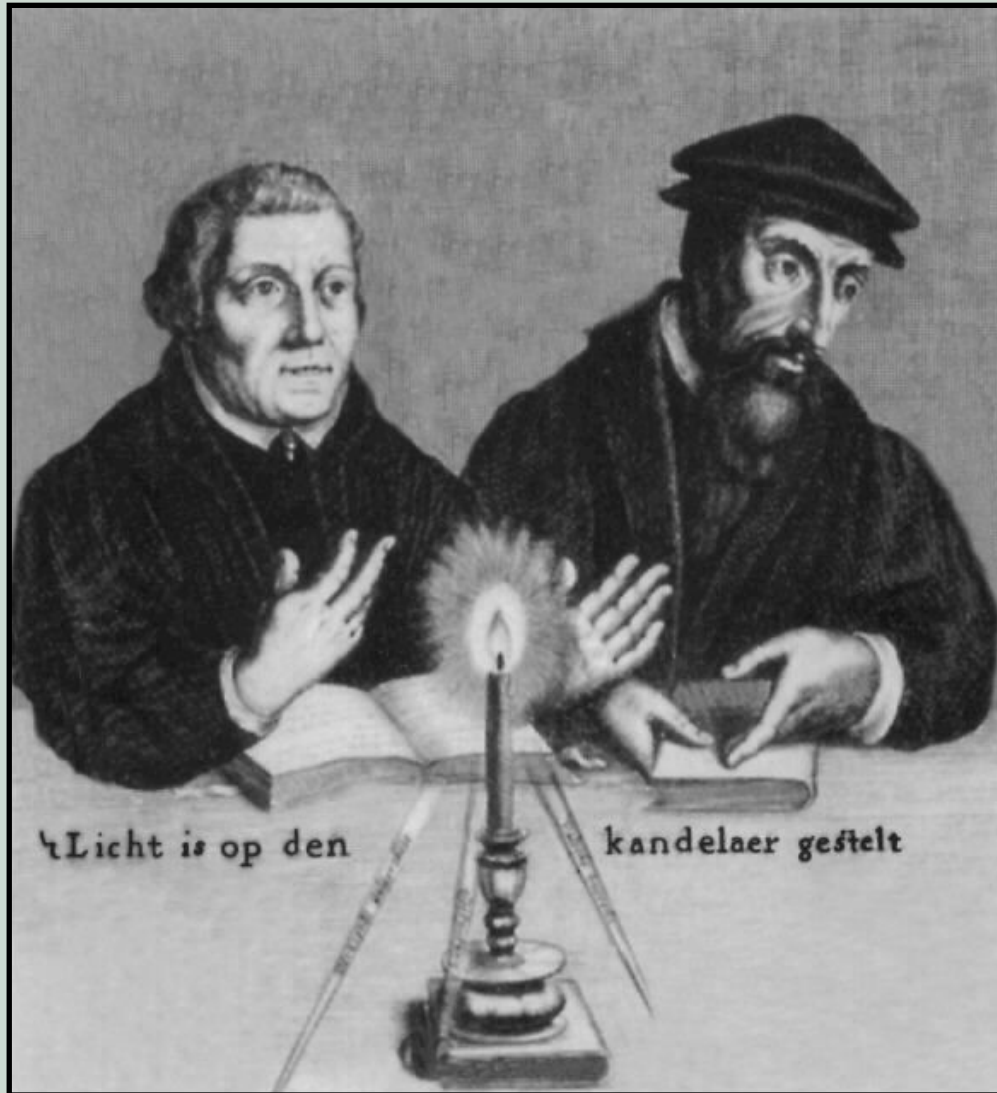


LOGIA

A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY



WITTENBERG & GENEVA

REFORMATION 2002

VOLUME XI, NUMBER 4

εἶ τις λαλεῖ, ὡς λόγια Θεοῦ

LOGIA is a journal of Lutheran theology. As such it publishes articles on exegetical, historical, systematic, and liturgical theology that promote the orthodox theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. We cling to God's divinely instituted marks of the church: the gospel, preached purely in all its articles, and the sacraments, administered according to Christ's institution. This name expresses what this journal wants to be. In Greek, ΛΟΓΙΑ functions either as an adjective meaning "eloquent," "learned," or "cultured," or as a plural noun meaning "divine revelations," "words," or "messages." The word is found in 1 Peter 4:11, Acts 7:38, and Romans 3:2. Its compound forms include ὁμολογία (confession), ἀπολογία (defense), and ἀναλογία (right relationship). Each of these concepts and all of them together express the purpose and method of this journal. LOGIA considers itself a *free conference in print* and is committed to providing an independent theological forum normed by the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. At the heart of our journal we want our readers to find a love for the sacred Scriptures as the very Word of God, not merely as rule and norm, but especially as Spirit, truth, and life which reveals Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, we confess the church, without apology and without rancor, only with a sincere and fervent love for the precious Bride of Christ, the holy Christian church, "the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God," as Martin Luther says in the Large Catechism (LC II, 42). We are animated by the conviction that the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession represents the true expression of the church which we confess as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

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COVER ART

The illustration on this issue's cover is a detail from a Dutch engraving from the seventeenth century titled "The Candlestick." The Gospel's light has been rekindled by the reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin, reminiscent of Jesus' words in Matthew 5:15, "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house" (KJV). The image is from the archive of Concordia Historical Institute.

The Rev. Mark A. Loest, assistant director for reference and museum at Concordia Historical Institute, provided the art.

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FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

AC [CA]	Augsburg Confession
AE	<i>Luther's Works</i> , American Edition
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
Ep	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
FC	Formula of Concord
LC	Large Catechism
LW	<i>Lutheran Worship</i>
SA	Smalcald Articles
SBH	<i>Service Book and Hymnal</i>
SC	Small Catechism
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
SL	St. Louis Edition of Luther's Works
Tappert	<i>The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church</i> . Trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert
Triglotta	<i>Concordia Triglotta</i>
TLH	<i>The Lutheran Hymnal</i>
Tr	Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
WA	<i>Luthers Werke</i> , Weimarer Ausgabe [Weimar Edition]

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CORRESPONDENCE



To the editors:

✧ As a layman seriously interested in theology, a subscriber to *LOGIA* and a strong believer that liberal arts are a necessary part of a true education, I enjoyed volume eleven, number two.

Humanism is an essential factor in this world among the uneducated as well as the educated. Knowledge is always power and a good liberal arts education gives a Christian the chance to understand other ideas and disciplines. This does not mean that these ideas are used to dilute scriptural doctrine, but to enable one to better combat the fallacies of the non-believing world.

The other part of a liberal arts education is that it provides the means of enjoying a fuller life, of opening new vistas and of giving one an inner confidence to succeed in his calling.

As far as “Why Should I Learn Latin . . .,” I count my high school Latin one of my most useful experiences. It has allowed me not only to research information in that language but has been the basis for understanding other languages in my European travels.

Education has a practical end, but whether it is philosophy, art, language, history, music, or other, one studies for the pleasure of knowing and understanding. The problem may arise when a person or an institution wants to define God in light of secular education rather than defining secular education in the light of the Triune God’s revelations.

Hubert L. Dellinger Jr., M.D.

To the editors:

✧ This [“Lutheran Schooling: Ten Theses and Some Antitheses” by Mervyn Wagner, *LOGIA XI*, no. 2] is a rare piece of work that succinctly and clearly sets out what “Lutheran Schools” are to be. Many thanks! I have been a reader for some time, but was particularly struck by the insight and clarity of this article.

*Burneal Fick
Bishop of Aurora*

To the editors:

✧ What seemed lacking in the treatment of Lutheran education in the Easter-tide 2002 [*LOGIA XI*, no. 2] issue was that education, according to our confession of faith, is to flow from parents. Our Large Catechism addressed education under the Fourth Commandment: “For all authority flows and is propagated from the authority of parents. For where a father is unable alone to educate his child, he employs a schoolmaster to instruct him.” The first, the preferable, way to educate children is for the father and mother to do it. If he, she, they are unable to do it, then they *should employ* a schoolmaster. What every Lutheran pastor and church, even those with day schools, should be doing is admonishing parents to take personal responsibility for the education of their children. Lutheran home-schoolers have done just this, and I found their not being mentioned glaring.

Lutheran education should be seen as flowing not from the state or church, but from the home. Some of the articles

regarded the task of education as particularly the state’s responsibility. This is how we have been schooled in America. In 1833 the last state officially disestablished the church. In the 1830s the first state-run school was opened. In other words, the nineteenth century saw the disestablishment of the church and the establishment of out-of-the-home education.

The “established” school is a problem. School and teachers have gained far more prestige and authority than they deserve. For decades it was a debate in America whether teaching could legitimately be called a profession. Now who dare gainsay it? Professional education is the official religion of the United States. Our coins would be truthful if they said “In Professional Educators We Trust” rather than “In God We Trust.” The school year now determines the ebb and flow of life even as the church year used to. Everyone in the community knows when the first day of school, parent-teacher conferences, spring break, and the last day of school are.

Lutherans who confess that the authority and responsibility for education are entrusted by God to the home not the state or the church ought to be at the forefront in encouraging parents to homeschool. Right now, as we all know, the movement is dominated by Reformed theology. It doesn’t have to be this way. But no district or synodical leader, to my knowledge, has dared to champion home schooling for fear, I suspect, of offending the Lutheran school system. This is wrong-headed.

I do not see large numbers of confessional Lutheran mothers, fathers, or pastors coming out of a Lutheran school system where 30 to 75 percent of the students are not Lutheran. Sound Lutherans are not raised in an adversarial environment any more than one raises sound vegetables in an adverse environment.

Doubtless someone will object: I would be all for homeschooling if it weren't for the socialization aspect. How will the children get socialized if they are educated in the home?" Two points. The children will not be socialized like every other child in the educational system, and that in my mind is a plus. Second, why would parents want anyone other than themselves socializing their children? The dictionary defines socialize as "to make social; make fit for life in companionship with others." You do not make children "fit for life in companionship with others" by throwing them into a group of their peers! That's called peer pressure. In my experience it is not the school or the teacher who does the socializing in school. It's the class clown, loud mouth, show-off, or troublemaker. By the way, the word "socialize" came into English between 1820-1830, right when the public school system was being established.

Still many Lutherans still say, "I could never teach my own children." Here we have arrived at the problem that Lutheran and public educators not only fail to address but exacerbate. Professional educators implicitly or explicitly say, "Of course you can't. You should trust us to educate your children." What Lutheran educators should say is, "Why do you think God gave them to you if not to educate them?" From this premise, in my opinion, Lutheran education ought to precede.

*Paul R. Harris
Austin, Texas*

To the editors:

✧ I was recently given a few copies of *LOGIA*, which I read with great interest. I was especially struck, and I think that is the *mot juste*, by Steven Hein's article on Tentatio [vol. XI, no. 2]. It is strong, and I don't know if it is more humbling or encouraging. Of course the writer is expected to make his case strongly, and can't chase down every rabbit that is started, but I wonder if the article wasn't too one-sided? Conscience, for example, takes its lumps, "the devil's lethal playground." "Let your conscience be your guide . . . is Satan's victory." Romans 2:15 and 2 Corinthians 1:12 sound rather different.

And it might be fine to mock "and they'll know we are Christians by our love." I grant they might not know me. But what about passages concerning good trees and good fruit? I agree with the challenge to sweetness and light Christianity, but . . .

On another note, I can't, as a classicist, allow a couple of mistakes to pass. "All is *absconditas sub contrario*." I think we want *absconditum* or *-ta* (p.37). And *solam Christum* (p. 40) will surely be approved by feminists, but I doubt that *LOGIA* is into inclusive language, or whatever it is called. If there are mistakes in the Latin (or Greek), the reader will wonder why it is being used. For a show of scholarliness?

Still, I found the articles in *LOGIA* very good. I assume that you can pass this on to Steven Hein. And while I'm at it, I might as well subscribe.

*Robert C. Schmiel
Emeritus Professor of Classics
University of Calgary
Calgary, AB, Canada*

LOGIA CORRESPONDENCE and COLLOQUIUM FRATRUM

We encourage our readers to respond to the material they find in LOGIA—whether it be in the articles, book reviews, or letters of other readers. While we cannot print everything that is sent, we hope that our Colloquium Fratrum section will allow for longer response/counter-response exchanges, whereas our Correspondence section is a place for shorter "Letters to the Editors."

If you wish to respond to something in an issue of LOGIA, please do so soon after you receive an issue. Since LOGIA is a quarterly periodical, we are often meeting deadlines for the subsequent issue about the time you receive your current issue. Getting your responses in early will help keep them timely. Send your Correspondence contributions to LOGIA Correspondence, 314 Pearl Street, Mankato, MN 56001, or your Colloquium Fratrum contributions to LOGIA Editorial Department, 314 Pearl Street, Mankato, MN 56001.

Union and Confession (March 1934)

HERMANN SASSE

Translated by Gerald S. Krispin



IN ISSUE SEVEN OF THE PERIODICAL *Theologische Existenz Heute* [*Theological Existence Today*] Karl Barth raises the question as to whether the relationship between Lutherans and the Reformed needs to be subjected to a revision in light of the fully transformed circumstances of the churches: “The Lutherans and Reformed of today are not and cannot be permitted to confess *in opposition to one another*, but they can and must confess in unison as *evangelical Lutherans and evangelical Reformed*.” Barth explains that he was never a friend of the so-called Union of the nineteenth century. This union was born not of a common confession, but out of a lack of confession. However, today Lutherans and Reformed are called to an agreement of faith to confront that heresy which threatens the authority of the Word of God.

I truly take the differences which stand between Lutherans and the Reformed seriously. But in taking them seriously, and if indeed we should be called upon *today*, I cannot understand ourselves to confess them in any other way than simply in the *agreement* of faith. The current dispute in the church, and that which we are to “confess” today, does not concern the Lord’s Supper, but the First Commandment. In the face of our present plight and task, that of the fathers must retreat, that is, it must become a certainly still serious, but no longer church divisive antithesis of the theological *schools*.

Barth directs his urgent appeal to Lutheran theologians to consider the following question: “In any event, their numerical superiority should not hinder the German Lutherans from hearing our question today, if we ask them to do so. There *are*, after all, as few as there may be of us, not alone in the evangelical German church. The question concerning an evangelical agreement is addressed to them.”

The seriousness with which a theologian like Barth asks the question must itself urge Lutheranism toward an answer. For the one asking the question is not just any professor of theology, but that man, who as no other has propelled the question concerning the meaning of the Reformation and the very essence of the evangelical church into our age, and who has thereby plumbed the depths and to a degree shaken the theology of all confessions, and all this far beyond the borders of the German language. If one might here be permitted to apply to theology the statement of a French intellectual concerning the scale according to which one is to measure the profundity of a philosophical system, then one could say the following concerning the theology of Karl Barth:

A great theology is not one which is not contested. It is a theology which is victorious somewhere. A great theology is not a theology without reproach. It is a theology without fear. A great theology is not a theology against which nothing can be said. It is a theology, which says something. . . . It is one, which introduces a restlessness, through which the world is shaken.

Because the teachings of Karl Barth have brought a restlessness into the world, because it has startled churches and their theologies out of the security of the *ecclesiam habemus* [we have the church], because it has said something which has not been said with this kind of authority since the time of the Reformation; for this reason this teaching poses a question to Lutheranism which in this sense was posed by none of the philosophical and theological systems of the last century. There are Lutheran churches in the world which have taken virtually no notice of the existence of Hegel and for whom Schleiermacher never was a serious problem. Yet they were not ruined because of this omission. But the question, which Barth’s theology means for Lutheranism, will have to be answered by every Lutheran church at some time. It is the question concerning the legitimacy and purpose of the claims of the Lutheran church to be the evangelical church, the church of the pure gospel, and therefore the question as to the legitimacy and reason for its demarcation in relation to other church fellowships, which Lutheranism at one time or another did emphasize with its confessional writings.

But not only Barth places us before this question. His question was taken up by the Reformed church of Germany. A free synod, consisting of 167 congregations, each of which was represented by its pastor and an elder according to the old Calvinist church, with unanimous approval gratefully took upon itself the responsibility for Barth’s “*Declaration Concerning the Proper Understanding of the Reformational Confessions in the German Evangelical Churches Today*.” Even though no officially binding position in the sense of a binding church resolution can be ascribed to it, we nevertheless recognize this synod as a true synod. We recognize it as a legitimate representative of the Reformed churches in Germany which exist in the midst of the diverse state churches, since the Reformed Union, which has up to this point represented this church before Christianity in the world, has pledged itself to it.

Theology knows of still a higher church authority than that spelled out in the individually valid constitutions and bylaws of the historically developed churchdoms [*Kirchentümer*]. It is that authority which flows from the confessions of the churches con-

cerned. It is the rule for theology, that in the case where proper church governance, understood in terms of consonance with the teachings of the church is extinguished, that true church governance reverts to those who are its supporters according to the confession. Thus, in the case where a church is forced to be subject to the foreign domination of an alien confession, or one that is without a confession, as was indeed often the case in the Reformed and Lutheran churches since the period of territorial churchdom, it reverts to those who are elected Presbyters and to the synods according to the Reformed constitution in the case of the Reformed churches, and to those pastors who hold fast to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession in the case of the Lutherans. It is to be deeply lamented that this principle, which is so self-evident, did not gain acceptance in Germany one hundred years ago, even though it was repeatedly advocated—predominantly by Lutheran theologians. We congratulate the Reformed brothers for having dared to take this step so courageously. We only regret that they did not take it any earlier, so that with the demise of the anti-confessional territorial imperial plenary episcopate [*Summepiskopat*] the reorganization of the church constitution did not bring forth great church reform in the sense of having employed the confessions. In fact, a similar resolution of the French-Reformed was defeated at the Old Prussian general synod in 1930 in order to save the Union. We thankfully and without envy take note that now again, as previously during the time of the “congregations under the cross” [*Gemeinden unter dem Kreuz*] a Reformed Church is emerging in Germany.

For some two hundred years the “modern world” has made inroads into the evangelical church, secularizing it and dissolving the teachings of the Reformation.

But we would like to ask Karl Barth if he would bring his entire influence to bear upon this church, to the end that the church politicking which has been practiced with such great expertise in recent years along the road leading from Aachen-Cologne to Wuppertal and the Berlin Zoological Gardens finally be terminated. Such church politics have indeed brought victory upon victory for the “Reformed cause,” but also one defeat upon the other for the Reformed church. These church political tactics finally maneuvered it into the circumstances under which it met at Loccum in 1933 with that which one has come to call “Lutheranism” in Germany today. This having been said, we are listening with great attentiveness to the voice of the emerging Reformed church of Germany as it comes to be heard in the following statement:

In light of the consensus under which this error (that is, “the opinion, that next to God’s revelation, grace, and honour, a

legitimate, albeit imperious human authority has the right to determine the message and shape of the church, that is, the temporal path to eternal salvation”) has come to light today, the unified congregations of the one German Evangelical church are called upon to reveal anew the majesty of the one Lord of the one church and consequently the essential unity of their faith, their love and their hope, their proclamation through word and sacrament, their confession and their task, irrespective of their Lutheran, Reformed, or Union origins and responsibilities. Accordingly, the opinion that priority must nevertheless be given to the legitimate representation of Lutheran, Reformed, and Union “interests” over and against the necessity for unified evangelical confession and striving *against* error and *for* the truth is rejected.

This is the question which the Reformed church poses to German Lutheranism today. Since the poor beaten church of the Augsburg Confession no longer has any official channels which could speak for it confessionally—the General Evangelical Lutheran Conference is as much out of the question as the General Evangelical Lutheran *Kirchenzeitung*—the Reformed will have to be temporarily content with the “diffident opinions” of individual theologians. The following sentences are to be understood merely in the sense of being a “recommendation.” They purposely avoid engagement with details of the Reformed “declaration” and seek to provide an answer only to the said question.

A confessionally faithful Lutheranism will want to give unqualified assent to the Reformed in the following point: there is a common enemy today, against which both evangelical confessions have to fight shoulder to shoulder. This enemy is the great heresy which has broken forth in our churches. It did not arise today or yesterday. Our churches, the Lutheran as well as the Reformed, were ill. We have suspected it for some time. But how serious our condition was we only learned as this creeping disease entered the acute stage. It is senseless to rail against the symptoms of the disease. The doctrines, the church-politics of the German Christians, and whatever else may be mentioned, all this is the result of a long ecclesiastical and theological development. For some two hundred years the “modern world” has made inroads into the evangelical church, secularizing it and dissolving the teachings of the Reformation. And now these churches are being drawn into the fall of “modern culture.” This is a process which will also necessarily run its course in the rest of the world. The life-and-death question of evangelical churchdom [*Kirchentum*] is whether the poison which has infected its body can be extracted, and whether it has the capability to distinguish the pure teaching of the gospel from all religious and philosophical theories with which it has been mixed. The reason this is so difficult, and why the condition of the church has become so questionable, is because the church in the modern world has *lost the ability* to distinguish between truth and error. This vital function, the function of formulating doctrines and confessions, must first be laboriously learned anew. This battle for pure doctrine will be painful. It will appear to the world as the squabbling of theologians, as did the battles of the ancient church and those of the Reformation. The world will also seek to prevent it. But it cannot stop this battle. Shoulder to shoulder Lutherans

and Reformed will fight against the false teaching which threatens the extraordinariness and uniqueness of the revelation of God in Scripture. They will fight against the *Marcionite* destruction of the *one* Bible, against the false doctrine that denies that through Adam's fall "human nature and being is wholly corrupt," against the forgery of the universal Christian teaching concerning the Person of Jesus Christ and the Triunity of God. Indeed, the "No" of confessionally faithful Lutheranism against the form in which the great heresy of modernism appears today will have to be more blunt than that of the Reformed for the following reason: the form in which this heresy has appeared in Germany grew upon the soil of the Lutheran church. And it no longer wraps itself within the mantle of idealistic philosophy or mystic enthusiasm, but in the deceptive cloak of Lutheran orthodoxy. This is the frightening cunning of the old evil foe against whom the Lutheran church has fought from the beginning, that by means of his enthusiasm, which "resides in Adam's offspring since the beginning of the world," he marches into the church carrying the confessions under one arm and Lutheran chorales on his lips—promising what all enthusiasts have done—to complete the Reformation. Because this great heresy today—just as each heresy bears the marks of the churchdom out of which it grew—appears as Pseudo-Lutheranism, it tends to confuse the Lutheran church more than the Reformed.

The church in the modern world has lost the ability to distinguish between truth and error.

It is for this reason that we Lutherans have to say "No" more decisively than the Reformed. But at the same time it is also more difficult for us to separate ourselves from it. It is always easier to deal with a false teaching which comes from afar than with that which arises within one's own house. For this reason the battle in which confessionally faithful Lutheranism has to engage is in many respects other than that of the Reformed: it is a battle for the right understanding of the teaching of our confessions with respect to the questions at issue today. Insofar as this battle has to be fought on the field of our confessions, we must fight it out alone. Yet while engaged in battle we will be gratefully conscious that the Reformed are fighting against the mutual opponent at their front with the weapons of their confession. We will gladly hear their counsel and warning, because we know that we are struggling toward the same goal along with them: for the pure understanding of the one Gospel.

But in the face of a common opponent who seems so superior, and in light of the critical questions posed through him, have not the issues on the basis of which the Lutheran and Reformed church once parted company become questions of second rank? Are not the opposing viewpoints which once divided two churches from one another merely two separate theological schools with-

in one and the same *evangelical* church today? Do we not have to come to an understanding, unless it is in vain that we will have merged into one "German Evangelical Church" today, as Barth says (p. 7)? Such is the objection of the Reformed. This is our response: we have indeed "merged" more or less softly into one German Evangelical Church. That this church is no church in the *theological* sense, whatever else it might be in a legal sense, is clear to all those theologians for whom the old ontological designations [*Wesensbestimmungen*] of the church in the confessions are not antiquated phrases. It would have only become a church if it had succeeded in bringing forth a common confession. Furthermore, who are the "*we*" who have merged here? In the opinion of the "declaration," they are congregations of Lutheran, Reformed, and Union "origin" and "responsibility." What a fallacy! Did none of the 167 pastors, nor anyone from among those who regulate modernization within the Reformed Union actually notice this fallacy? It cannot be assumed that they did not want to notice it! Not congregations, but state churches merged. Among them were state churches in which the *Confessio Augustana* remains in effect to this very day, as it has for centuries,—yet who knows for how long? Only on the basis of the solemn promise that the confessional status would be protected as stipulated within the constitution did our bishops bring the difficult sacrifice of subscribing to a new church constitution, ultimately for the sake of the people and the state. One perhaps does not know exactly what these confessions mean for the Lutheran church among the Reformed. The Reformed church has other marks besides its confessions, by which it is recognized as such. It has its constitution and church discipline. Reformed churches—in Switzerland or in the United States, for example—are able to survive if their confessions should be annulled. This the Lutheran churches would not survive. We have no other external bond of unity which simultaneously lends itself to be the *consensus de doctrina evangelii* [consensus of evangelical doctrine]. We, the Lutheran churches of the world, stand on the basis of this confession despite all differences of polity and liturgy, pulpit and altar fellowship. This confession binds us beyond all national and linguistic differences into the unity of a confessional church. We hold no hope for any understanding of this fact from the *German Christians*. Behind this confessional church they will suspect a "power superior to the state." But they may rest assured. We have no power. Yet from the disciples of Calvin we can expect understanding for the fact that we cannot easily annul our confessions. That would have occurred at the moment in which we would have declared that the opposing viewpoints between Lutheran and Reformed churches are no longer church-divisive antitheses, but only differences among theological schools within the same church. We would then admit that various Lutheran confessions from the *Augustana* to the *Formula of Concord* have erred in very substantial points, indeed, that the whole development of our church doctrine was wrong. Yet we are prepared to make this concession at the very moment in which we are led to be convinced of our error. Never has the Lutheran church claimed that its confessions are even remotely infallible—if certain theologians have asserted such a thing, then the Lutheran church as a whole cannot be held responsible for this. Along with the *Formula of Concord* we see in our confessions only a witness of how God's word had come to be understood by those living back then. We are convinced

that they have not spoken the final word. We therefore want to contend with the Reformed brethren, as with Christians of all confessions, that God may deliver us from *all* obstinate dogmatism and lead us to the knowledge of the truth of the one gospel. But now a certain Mr. Hossenfelder has appeared in Berlin, stating that the question of the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament of the altar should no longer be divisive for the church, but has come to be only an issue which separates theological schools. We cannot concur with this anymore than could our brethren in the faith in America if some prophet should arise in San Francisco. Besides, our altar still stands within the church and not in the theological lecture hall.

We are certainly prepared to announce and witness to the world at any time that agreement in which Lutherans and Reformed have to speak out against contemporary errors, the agreement in which we know ourselves unified with all those who confess the majesty of the *one* Lord and the *one* church. We will also let ourselves be admonished when we confuse "Lutheran interests" with responsibility towards the Lutheran confessions. We are also joyfully prepared to work toward a true unification of the evangelical churches in the truth, insofar as it is humanly possible, as we have indeed done for years in ecumenical work. Indeed, we believe that this day of unification is closer today than it was a decade ago. But to declare a Union at this time would bring about the paralysis of our strength in the difficult battle of the moment.

It may be permitted to elaborate briefly upon this last sentence on the basis of an example, which also addresses the question of the Lord's Supper. As the *Junge Kirche*, page 159f reports, the *Reichsbischof* intends to introduce a uniform liturgy for the *Reich*. It is firstly still not clear how this decision of our *summus episcopus* should be brought into harmony with the constitutional provision according to which the independence in worship is solemnly guaranteed to the state churches. Since the *Reichsbischof* at his call through the National Synod, at the very location at which the Lutheran divine service was first introduced, had pledged himself to this constitution, one could expect that the proposed Union liturgy would not be forced upon any state church. But should some theological think-tank or commission manufacture a Union liturgy which would find the approval of the state churches, then even the Reformed congregations would have to ask themselves if they should express potential concerns. Lutherans would stand before the same question, just as they did one hundred years ago in Prussia. It would soon become clear, however, that these potential concerns would stand in diametrical opposition to each other, as discussions about the most recent Prussian agenda have proven. What the Reformed declare to be "remnants of an old Mystery Liturgy" [*Mysterienliturgy*] would be of precious value to Lutheran congregations. Perhaps the church leadership would then claim for itself the wisdom of Solomon as expressed in an earlier decision of the Supreme Church Consistory [*Oberkirchenrat*], that these concerns cancel each other out. This is only presented here as an example that the potential current agreement between the Lutherans and Reformed falls short of reaching the practical goals necessary to succeed in the struggle for the preservation of the pure evangelical church.

As a result we temporarily have no other option than to stand beside each other as good Reformed and as good Lutherans, and

to confess the faith of the fathers together where this *can* be done, separately where this *has* to be done. One and a half decades have passed since the understanding for the confession of the church was reawakened in Germany among the Lutherans and the Reformed. It was at first theoretical recognition. Now the Lord of the church has sent us into the difficult school in which the church at all times has had to learn from bitter experience what confessing—and what denial—means. Within these experiences the evangelical churches first became confessional churches. And he who would scold the harshness and strictness of confessionalism should not forget what it has given the Protestant peoples and indeed the German nation. The hard-as-steel characters of the old Calvinism, men such as a John Knox, "who never feared the face of man," helped to form the nations of the west. And there where they were expelled, as was the case in France, there the nation noticed too late that it had expelled its best. Or we recall the Interim in Germany: "Write, dear Sir, write not in vain, that your pastor may remain!" [*Schreibet, lieber Herre, schreibet, daß ihr af der Pfarre bleibt!*] Hundreds of those who did not sign willingly

Ultimately only as a confessing church that knows what she confesses, but only as such, can she courageously go through the ages.

became destitute. We recall all that which the Hohenzollern since Johann Sigismund and the "Great Elector" have done to the Lutheran church: the slow but thorough extermination of Lutheran theology in Brandenburg-Prussia, beginning with the prohibition to attend the University of Wittenberg and continuing with the closing of the *Cathedra Lutheri* [chair of Luther], the muzzle-order of the Great Elector, the prohibitions of the meetings of Lutheran pastors, to the testament of the (in his own way) great Prince, wherein he commended to his successors that foreigners rather than his own Lutheran subjects be made into officials. We remember the abolition of the Lutheran liturgy one hundred years later under Friedrich Wilhelm I, the introduction of the Union and the Agenda with force of arms and under the threat of criminal prosecution. We recall the church politics of Bismarck and its victims. What a chain of misunderstandings, "a hodge-podge of error and violence," as Goethe came to describe the history of the church! All these experiences the church has survived, and through them she became the *confessing* church. Ultimately only as a confessing church that *knows what she confesses*, but only as such, can she courageously go through the ages. Only as such can she also respond not only to the misunderstandings of the best statesmen which from time to time rise above her, but also to the heresies which threaten her life. Only as such can she come to speak with the confidence of faith: *nubicula est, transibit* [it is a little cloud; it will pass]. LOGIA

The Person of Christ as Confessed by the Session

ALBERT B. COLLVER III



“He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.”—Nicene Creed

WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THE PERSON OF CHRIST, the ascension and the session to the right hand of God ordinarily do not figure into the portrait of Christ. After all, while the ascension and the session to the right hand of God are confessed in the ecumenical creeds, they are considered almost as an appendix, or an afterthought. Do the Creeds confess the ascension and the session to the right hand simply to provide a complete description of the life of Christ? The fact that Scripture proclaims Christ’s ascension and session to the right hand is reason enough to include them in the Creed. Yet this prompts the question why the Scriptures record Christ’s ascension. In dogmatics books, Christ’s ascension and session are usually treated as part of his state of exaltation.¹ Using this dogmatic category, the ascension and session—strictly speaking—would not be of primary importance to the person of Christ. In more recent dogmatics books, the ascension is scarcely mentioned at all. This is due in part to the view that Christ’s resurrection renders the ascension superfluous. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus are seen as a single event.² This view holds that the ascension adds nothing to Christ’s exaltation that was not already accomplished in his resurrection.³ Some even hold that the idea of an exaltation is earlier than that of the resurrection.⁴ Thus the promise of Scripture is not so much that Christ would be raised from the dead, but that he would be exalted into the heavens. A slight variation to this theme is the two-stage exaltation. The ascension is the second stage of Christ’s exaltation; therefore, the ascension simply completes what was already accomplished in the resurrection of Christ.⁵

There is yet another, more recent, way to view the ascension that shifts the focus of the ascension away from Christ and to his church. According to this view, the ascension matrixes the church; that is, it forms the beginning of the church and her new relation with the exalted and eschatological Christ.⁶ Thus the ascension and session of Christ have more to do with the eschatological unfolding of the church than with the person of Christ. The emphasis of the ascension on the church in recent times⁷ either represents a shift away from the creedal confession that the church primarily is confessed in the Third Article in connection with the

work of the Holy Spirit, or it seeks to find a greater unity between the Second and Third Articles of the Creed. Perhaps it is a little of both. Nevertheless, the ascension and session of Christ to the right hand of the Father would seem to pertain more to his work than to his person.

Despite the fact that Jesus’ ascension into heaven primarily has been understood as part of his exaltation and as part of his saving work, the ascension and session of Christ to the right hand of God does carry important implications for his person. The creedal confession of Christ’s person and the confession of his ascension and session are antiphonic, a duet informing the confession of the other. In other words, when the confession of Christ is seen and treated as an organic unity, the confession of Christ’s person informs and shapes—it norms—the confession of Christ’s ascension and session. Likewise, how Christ’s ascension and session are confessed profoundly affect how his person is confessed. At first glance on the basis of historical evidence or of dogmatic tradition, there does not appear to be much evidence of this connection. The Christological controversies of the early centuries were not caused by extensive arguments over the ascension. Nor did the church Fathers write treatises on the session to the right hand of God the Father. Yet lurking in the background of these Christological controversies were the questions raised by Christ’s ascension into heaven.

In a similar manner, the descent into hell posed fewer but similar questions to the ascension into heaven. While one might expect Christ’s descent into hell and Christ’s ascent into heaven to bear an antithetical relation, this is not the case. Ordinarily, to descend and to ascend are polar opposites, but in the case of the descent into hell and the ascent into heaven, both are part of Christ’s exaltation. Consequently both moved in the same direction and posed similar questions and challenges to the person of Christ. While it might be argued that Christ’s exaltation in particular, and not his ascension, prompted certain questions regarding Christ’s person—and in a certain sense this is correct—the questions seem to form more around Christ’s ascension into heaven than around his descent into hell or around his resurrection. Christ’s ascension and session to the right hand of the Father in particular, and not the exaltation in general, bear the brunt of the challenges to Christ’s person. We would contend that several of the theological positions held by varying confessions of the faith are directly related to how the interrelation between Christ’s person and Christ’s ascension is answered. How Christ’s ascension is confessed is then a diagnostic probe that tests how Christ’s person is confessed.

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Christ's ascension and session to the right hand of God is nothing other than the exaltation of Christ's human nature. Herein is the problem. Many of the errors and heresies in the early church were caused from a denial or diminution of the exaltation of Christ's human nature. Frequently, if the confession remained marginally Christian, the exaltation of the human nature was not denied outright, but rather was diminished through the use of *verbalizers*, that is, a verbal expression. In this case, the exaltation of Christ's human nature was explained as a figure of speech or as a title of honor. The Valentinians would be, for instance, an example of a group who denied the human nature, since they imagined that Christ's assumed nature was not human but some kind of divine essence. Athanasius in his *Epistle to Epictetus*⁸ reported that some had said, "The Flesh was not accessible to death, but belonged to the immortal Nature."⁹ In other words, the flesh of Christ was divine and not human. If his flesh is not human, it is not like ours and he then is not a savior of our flesh. Under this situation, the most grievous problem that mankind faces is that he is human. In order to be saved, man must then lose his human nature and become divine. Such views lead to the vilification of matter and of God's good creation. The body is evil, while the soul is divine. The physical realm is inferior to the superior spiritual realm. The body is to be forsaken in favor of the spirit in order to ensure salvation.

As reasonable as this view seems, it is not the gospel, which proclaims to us that Christ took on human flesh in order to redeem us. According to the Scriptures, man does not need saving from his humanity but from his sin. The fact that we are human beings does not separate us from God. What separates us from God is our sin. The gospel gives to us a Savior who rescues us from sin, not from our human nature. As the Creed confesses, "He was made man." Here the Greek of the Nicene Creed reads, ἐνανθρώπησαντα. This rare verb

is intended to express the *permanent* union of God with Human Nature; but, as was afterwards proved, it was not sufficiently technical to exclude heretical theories as to the mode of the union, whether by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh as in Apollinarianism, or by union with a human person as in Nestorianism.¹⁰

The Nicene Creed does not explicitly address the mode of the union; this would have to wait for Chalcedon. While the word ἐνανθρώπησαντα (*enanthropesanta*) was not able to defend against Nestorianism, it was helpful in addressing the concern Athanasius expressed in his letter to Epictetus, namely, that Christ's body was a human body. Thus the notions of the Apollinarians and the Valentinians were rejected by the Creed.

There is another aspect to Athanasius' report, "The Flesh was not accessible to death, but belonged to the immortal Nature."¹¹ Notice that the flesh could not die. Why was it incapable of dying? The flesh belonged to the immortal nature. In other words, the flesh was divine, and since the divine could not die, neither could the flesh. What initially appears as a concern for the human nature of Christ is really a guise to protect the divine nature from suffering. This same concern prompted the Arians to posit that Jesus was a creature, which was the opposite of the error of the Valentinians. Arianism can be explained as "a religious theory about the God who

suffers as we do, and therefore can redeem and divinize us. At the heart of the Arian debates was the question of the suffering of God."¹² Of course, the Arians solve the Theopaschite problem by making Jesus a creature and not fully God. Therefore through Jesus God can be sympathetic to our human condition and still remain impassible and free from suffering. The Arian debate pushed the Theopaschite question, which had been influencing the confession of God and Christ in the background for some time, into the foreground. Because the Council of Nicea dealt with the Arians by confessing a union between God and Man in Christ Jesus, it was no longer possible to speak of God and Christ as separate, and consequently impossible to explain away the suffering of God.

How Christ's ascension is confessed is then a diagnostic probe that tests how Christ's person is confessed.

With the emphasis now on the Incarnation, the question becomes "What is the relation of the human nature to the divine nature and how real is the union?" Cyril of Alexandria and Chalcedon are the champions who confessed the theopaschite formula. Speaking of the Logos Cyril says, "He remains what he was, and yet he assumed suffering according to the flesh."¹³ Cyril does not attempt to explain why the Logos is not denigrated by being joined with human flesh. He simply confesses, "Because he was God in the flesh, therefore the blood which was shed from him was God's blood, as God in the flesh he gave his body as a ransom."¹⁴ Cyril's confession that God suffered is an attack on the prior emphasis; that is, God's apathy. While both Cyril and Nestorius could confess that there are two natures in the one person of Christ,¹⁵ this proposition for Nestorius was abstract and capable of being pulled apart. Cyril's view of Christ, on the other hand, was concrete and based on the Gospel of John. As a result Cyril could confess that the Logos suffered according to the flesh, while Nestorius and his followers could only confess that the flesh or the human nature suffered. On account of this "Cyril was not only the savior of the East, but because of the Theotokos, also of the West."¹⁶

Yet despite Cyril's victory over the Nestorians, his Christology has an imperfection that gave a philosophical conception of God a foothold through the Middle Ages. This imperfection in his Christology is revealed in the cry of dereliction: "My God, why have you forsaken me?" Here Cyril will not permit God to suffer, saying Christ did not cry this out because of his own need or feelings but on account of all of human nature. In other words, Christ cried the dereliction for our benefit, not his. By not permitting the theopaschite formula to be manifest in the cry of dereliction, Cyril stands on the same philosophical basis that he condemned in Nestorius; namely, he fell captive to the apathy axioms.¹⁷ This flaw in Cyril's Christology remained throughout the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the Lutheran Confession of Christ owes more to Cyril than to Leo and his Tome with his Nestorianizing tendencies.

These Nestorianizing tendencies have still not been entirely purged from the western church. The tendency to pull apart, to separate, or at the very least to tug on the two natures of Christ becomes apparent when the issues surrounding the ascension of Christ are examined. The western church from the time of Leo has in some ways diminished the exaltation of Christ as it is confessed in the ascension and the session. While the ascension is confessed, the confession of Christ's exaltation has drifted from concreteness toward the abstract. Frequently, the two natures of Christ are discussed independently of each other. The divine nature is given the full honor and glory of the Father, while the human nature is exalted somewhat lower than God. This is done in order to protect the human nature from being something other than human. Once again, while the stated desire is to protect the human nature from becoming a phantom, the root desire is to protect the divine nature from suffering and indignity. While these tendencies had been circulating through the western church at least since Augustine, the issue did not become fully manifest until the Sacramentarian controversy in the sixteenth century. Chiefly at issue was how the ascension of Christ did not permit his true body and true blood to be there upon the altar and upon the communicant's tongue to eat and to drink. Thus the exaltation of Christ's human nature became a *verbaliter*, a figure of speech, and a title of honor rather than fact. Naturally the divine nature had all authority on heaven and on earth, but this was really never in dispute. The important question to answer is whether or not Jesus, who is true God and true Man, has all authority on heaven and on earth. If Jesus only possesses all authority by way of his divine nature, the exaltation is diminished and Christ is pulled apart in the way of Nestorius.

Brought to bear on the discussion of Christ's session at the right hand of God were a range of factors more and less relevant: Biblical and creedal language, Christology, philosophy and cosmology. The first aspect of the problem had to do with the passages from the Scriptures that speak of Christ's ascension into heaven. St. Luke (Lk 24:51) reports that Jesus was carried into heaven; St. Mark (Mk 16:19) further adds that after Jesus was received into heaven, he sat at the right hand of God (Rm 8:34 and 1 Pt 2:22). While there were other Scripture passages both from the Old Testament and from other New Testament references to the ascension, the main focus of the discussion centered around the Apostles' Creed, since it summarized the biblical witness.¹⁸ The next issue concerns whether heaven is a localized place, as was contended by medieval theology and others.¹⁹

This idea that heaven is a localized place was suggested by Augustine when he wrote to Dardanus concerning the question "in what manner the 'Mediator of God and men, the man, Christ Jesus,' is believed to be in heaven, when, hanging on the cross and at the point of death, he said to the believing thief: 'This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.'"²⁰ Augustine goes on to say of Christ, "while in His true body He is in some part of heaven."²¹ Augustine would seem to locate Christ's body at a particular place in heaven.²² While Augustine's position was generally accepted in the west, it did not result in a denial that the Lord's body and blood are on the altar until this was proposed by Cornelius Hoen and expanded on by Johannes Oecolampadius in the sixteenth century.²³ Working by way of christological analogy, theologians backed themselves into a problem. If Christ's body is in heaven and Christ is truly a man, how

can his body be in heaven and on the altar in the Lord's Supper? From Augustine until Aquinas this "problem" did not prompt the evacuation of Christ's words, "This is my body."

Herman Sasse has noted that this idea that Christ's body is in heaven and cannot be on earth is the basis of the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation.²⁴ Since Christ's body is located in heaven, it cannot be on many altars at the same time. The miracle of transubstantiation does not change the location of Christ's body from a local right hand,²⁵ but changes the substance of the bread and wine, which are located on the altar, into the very body and blood of Christ. In an article calling "back to Trent"²⁶ during the time of Vatican II, Herbert McCabe writes, "A physical body, such as that of Christ, simply cannot be naturally present in many places at once."²⁷ This was one of Thomas Aquinas' concerns in his expression of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

This idea that Christ's body is in heaven and cannot be on earth is the basis of the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation.

When Christ's human nature is confined to heaven, another difficulty occurs. If Christ's body is in heaven, how then is he able to be with his people? While the Creed confesses that he ascended into heaven and is seated there until he comes again descending on the clouds, Jesus also promised in Matthew 28, "Lo, I am with you always." A theologian being faithful to both the Creed and the Lord's word in Matthew 28 faces a minor dilemma that is solved by applying the Creed's confession of the ascension to the human nature of Christ, while applying the promise in Matthew 28 to the divine nature. Thus Christ is divided according to his natures but remains a unity in his personality. While this portrait of Christ was present in the western church for some time, it became most manifest in the sixteenth century over the debate concerning the Lord's Supper and the so-called *extra calvinisticum*.

The term *extra calvinisticum*, apparently coined by the Lutherans, arose out of the polemics of the sixteenth century between the Lutherans and the Reformed.²⁸ The *extra calvinisticum* maintains that Christ according to his human nature is not on earth, but according to his divinity is everywhere.²⁹ This idea was also expressed by Zwingli, who said, "And he knew perfectly well that according to his divine nature he is with us always."³⁰ The Heidelberg Catechism anticipates the charge of Nestorianism and attempts to refute it.³¹ When the question is asked whether the two natures in Christ are separated, the Heidelberg Catechism replies, "By no means; for since the Godhead is incomprehensible and every where present, it must follow that it is indeed beyond the bounds of the Manhood which it has assumed, but is yet none the less in the same also, and remains personally united to it."³² While the Heidelberg Catechism denies that the two natures of Christ are divided, it does permit him to be present *extra carnem*.³³ "The Logos is therefore *extra carnem*, not in the sense of

separation from the humanity, but solely in the sense of non-inclusion within the finite human nature.³⁴ After hearing this explanation of the *extra carnem*, one is tempted to apply the familiar phrase *finitum non capax infiniti* to it; however, Oberman objects to applying this phrase to Calvin, “for the simple reason that it does not occur in the works of Calvin.”³⁵ Nevertheless, followers of Calvin have adopted the phrase as a motto of their theology³⁶ and it does seem to provide an apt description of the analogy being employed. According to the previously cited passages from the Heidelberg Catechism, the reason Christ’s body cannot be present everywhere in the world or on the altar is due to the limitations of the human body, namely, that it is finite. Zwingli also would agree with the Heidelberg Catechism on this point.³⁷ Rome, too, rejects the omnipresence of Christ’s body for the same reasons as the Reformed.³⁸ Consequently, the divine nature is not limited in any way nor is it able to be contained, since it is infinite.

While the Heidelberg Catechism denies that the two natures of Christ are divided, it does permit him to be present extra carnem.

In order to permit an *extra carnem*, the Incarnation must be compared to humanity and divinity by analogy. First, one must have a definition of what it is to be man and what it is to be God. This definition has been most commonly formed by platonic antinomy. For instance, man is finite and God is infinite; man is mortal and God is immortal, and so on. Essentially, God is whatever man is not. Such definitions have been the bane of the church nearly since her beginning and many heresies and problems have arisen out of them, such as the theopaschite controversy. Those who hold the *extra calvinisticum* insist that the purpose of it is to safeguard the humanity of Jesus.³⁹ Who has ever heard of a man who could be everywhere? If Christ’s body is in heaven and on earth he surely is not a real man, since no man can be located in more than one place at a time. Such a man who is in two or more places surely is not a man and must be a phantasm or ghost. Yet this position overlooks that it is the Lord who is a man. He is a man in his own way, and is not subject to any definition or analogy one may supply as to what is human and what is divine. One difference between those who hold the *extra calvinisticum* and the Nestorians is that Nestorius sought to protect the Lord’s divinity from the indignity, Platonically speaking, of human limitations, while those who hold the *extra calvinisticum* seek to protect the Lord’s humanity.⁴⁰ These are then alternative forms of the same error.

In light of the *extra carnem*, what then do Reformed theologians mean when they use the term *totus Christus*, the whole Christ? Augustine was the first to use the phrase *totus Christus*.⁴¹ In

Augustine’s usage, the whole Christ refers to Christ’s head, that is, his person, and to his body, that is, the church.⁴² That the whole Christ for Augustine includes the church as the body of Christ is not surprising in light of his definition of “true body” as the church. To Lutheran ears, the *totus Christus* would refer to both natures, divine and human.⁴³ However, to the Reformed, *totus Christus* refers to the whole person of Christ, God and man, but not to the individual natures.⁴⁴ Therefore Christ, the God-Man, is present everywhere, but not in his human nature. Here a distinction is made between the *totus Christus* and the *totum Christi* (all of Christ).⁴⁵ Calvin elaborates on the distinction when he writes:

It is a distinction common in the schools, and which I am not ashamed to repeat, that though Christ is every where entire, yet all that is in him is not every where. And I sincerely wish that the schoolmen themselves had duly considered the meaning of this observation; for then we should never have heard of their stupid notion of the corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament. Therefore, our Mediator, as he is every where entire, is always near to his people; and in the sacred supper exhibits himself present in a peculiar manner, yet not with all that belongs to him; because, as we have stated, his body has been received into heaven, and remains there till he shall come to judgment.⁴⁶

This distinction mentioned by Calvin comes from Peter Lombard. When Lombard commented on the descent into hell he said, “Christ is everywhere but not all (of him).”⁴⁷ Lombard reasoned that since Christ’s body was in the tomb, it could not descend to hell with the person of Christ. According to this view, the Logos can separate from the human nature without dissolving the personal union. This is possible because of analogy between each nature. The Logos is present everywhere; the human nature is circumscribed in a local presence in heaven at the right hand of God. Although Lombard, like Calvin, effectively dissolves the personal union, he, unlike Calvin, never does apply this to the Lord’s Supper.

Oberman suggests that the *extra calvinisticum* is really an *extra christianum*,⁴⁸ while Willis prefers to call the *extra carnem*, the “*etiam extra patristicum*.”⁴⁹ We would agree with their observations that the *extra calvinisticum* is really an *extra patristicum* in the west. At least since Augustine, the west has had an *extra carnem*.⁵⁰ Sasse noted in a letter to Tom Hardt that “Aquinas was a Crypto-Calvinist in his theory”⁵¹ in regard to the *extra carnem*. The appearance of the *extra carnem* in various western fathers may explain, in part, why Rome largely ignored the *extra calvinisticum* debate between the Lutherans and the Reformed. Rome did not pay attention to the debate until the Reformed equated the Lutheran confession of Christ with Roman Christology.⁵² The Reformed confession simply inherited what had been a part of the western tradition. Calvin was not alone in espousing an *extra calvinisticum*, nor did he limit it to Christology in the *extra carnem*, but he also had other *extras*.⁵³

Luther here departs this tradition and will not confess any God apart from the man, Christ Jesus; there is no Christ outside of his flesh. Luther further writes, “All, what Christ did or suffered, God certainly did and suffered.”⁵⁴ This is Luther’s theopaschite formula.⁵⁵ God died. But Luther does not under-

stand dead biologically, but theologically; that is, dead is being handed over to the wrath of God to receive judgment. Luther's confession of Christ's humiliation is total and complete. There cannot be a greater humiliation than the death of God. This is our salvation. Notice that Luther does not speak abstractly according to one nature or to the other. Luther only confesses the total Christ. Jesus died; God died. Likewise, Luther confesses the total exaltation of Christ in his ascension and session at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. All authority on heaven and earth has been given to Christ; his ascension means that he has the ability to bestow his gifts in the way that he says. Luther does not limit Christ to some definition of what it is to be man or God. He simply confesses the words that Jesus gave him. If there is a contradiction between the confession of the Creed, "He ascended into heaven" and Jesus' words, "This is my body," Luther is content to allow the Lord to solve the problem while he simply confesses both in their totality.

Luther here departs this tradition and will not confess any God apart from the man, Christ Jesus; there is no Christ outside of his flesh.

Hermann Sasse wrote, "The Reformation struggle over the Lord's Supper was an attempt to understand Chalcedon."⁵⁶ The battle in regard to Christ's exaltation in his ascension and session at the right hand of God was waged over Leo's Tome, which was his confession of Chalcedon, and Cyril of Alexander's confession as it is confessed in the Chalcedonian Creed. The Lutheran confession of Christ followed in the way of Cyril, but it was the Lutheran Reformation of Chalcedon that most clearly confessed Christ. The Lutheran confession of Chalcedon is most clearly seen in the explanation to the Second Article in the Small Catechism. "Here is Chalcedon for children."⁵⁷ This confession gives full weight to the fact that Jesus is true God and true man united in the Incarnation. It confesses the total and complete humiliation of Christ. It confesses his full exaltation in the ascension of Christ into heaven. This is why, historically, Lutherans have placed such importance on the celebration of Ascension Day. While the Reformed celebrated Ascension Day as a remembrance for someone who had traveled to a far away land, the Lutherans celebrated Ascension Day to confess how close their Lord was to his people. Because Jesus was exalted to the highest heavens and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty until he comes to judge the world, he is so close to his people that he puts his true body and his true blood on their tongues to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of their sins. Any confession less than this, does not fully confess Chalcedon, nor does it confess Christ's full exaltation in his ascension and session at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. LOGIA

NOTES

1. See Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans. Walther W. F. Albrecht, 4 vols. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 2: 324–330.
2. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 1st ed., 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 2: 354–355. "First, we have the fact that the oldest NT witness the resurrection and ascension of Jesus form a single event, as in Phil 2:9; Acts 2:36; 5:30; the self-declaration of the risen Lord must thus have been from the concealment of heaven."
3. Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1991), 572. "The ascension really added nothing to the exaltation of Jesus, which was fully accomplished at the resurrection. The purpose of the ascension was simply to signify the end of the appearances."
4. Pannenberg, 354, n. 87.
5. Erickson, 574–575. "I believe that a more adequate view is what I would call two-stage exaltation. In the first stage, the resurrection body of Christ was as it appeared to the apostles . . . The ascension, however, completed the transformation."
6. See Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: The Works of God*, 1st ed., 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2: 334. The ascension is understood as an "eschatological separation" which is bridged by the sacraments. "Indeed, the eschatological separation is constituted in the sacramental relations themselves: the church, the community of disciples, is now the presence of Christ only in that within her that same Christ is present as an other than she, and there only as a sign signified by other signs."
7. See Douglas Bryce Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999).
8. Epictetus was the bishop of Corinth.
9. Athanasius, Epistle LIX, *To Epictetus*, 8. In *Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers* (hereafter NPNF), vol. II, no. 4: 573; cf. *Patrologia Graecae* (hereafter MPG), ed. Migne, vol. 26, 1064.
10. Thomas Herbert Bindley, *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith: The Creed of Nicea, Three Epistles of Cyril, the Tome of Leo, the Chalcedonian Definition*, 4th ed. (London: Methuen, 1950), 38.
11. Athanasius, Epistle LIX, *To Epictetus*, 8, in NPNF, vol. II, no. 4: 57; cf. MPG 26, 1064.
12. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 34.
13. Werner Elert, "Die Theopaschitische Formel," *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, vol. 4, no. 5 (1950): 199. "Er blieb was er war und er wurde doch . . . dem angenommenen Fleisch nach."
14. *Ibid.*, 199. "Weil er Gott im Fleisch war, darum war das von ihm vergossene Blut Gottes Blut, as Gott im Fleisch gab er seinem Leib als Lösegeld."
15. *Ibid.*, 200. "Nicht nur Nestorius hätte sie, wie oft gesagt wurde, unterschreiben können, sondern auch Kyrill."
16. *Ibid.*, 201. "Indessen Kyrill war nicht nur der Heilige des Ostens, sondern wegen des Theotokos auch im Westen."
17. *Ibid.*, 202. "Aber überall, wo man vor der letzten Konsequenz im Verständnis des menschlichen Verlassenseins des Gekreuzigten zurückschreckte, stand man eingeständenermaßen oder unbewußt ebenso wie die antiochenisch-nestorianischen Gegener Kyrills unter dem Zwang des Apathieaxioms."
18. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3d ed. (London: Longman, 1972), 369. "ascendit ad coelos, sedet ad dexteram dei patris omnipotentis."
19. Werner Elert, *Der Christliche Glaube: Grundlinien Der Lutherischen Dogmatik*, ed. Ernst Kinder, 3d ed. (Hamburg: Furcher-Verlag, 1956), 321. "Ist schon hierdurch das von der mittelalterlichen Theologie, aber auch von Zwingli, Calvin und von reformierten Bekenntnisschriften vertretene locale Verständnis der Himmelfahrt ausgeschlossen, so widerspricht ihm vollends das neutestamentliche Verständnis des Himmels." ("In this way then the local understanding of heaven is excluded, such as is found not only in the medieval theology but also in Zwingli, Calvin and the Reformed Confessions. Nor does such a

view have any support at all in the understanding of heaven in the New Testament.”)

20. Augustine, Letter to Dardanus, 417 a.d. Augustine, *Saint Augustine: Letters*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari, trans. Wilfrid Parsons, The Fathers of the Church 30 (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1955), 223.

21. Augustine, *Letter to Dardanus*, 255.

22. Hermann Sasse, “A Lutheran Contribution to the Present Discussions on the Lord’s Supper,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 30, no. 1 (1959): 32. “Although Augustine was never able to solve the problem of the relation between the body in heaven and the body in the sacrament theologically, he kept his belief in the Real Presence as it was expressed in the liturgy. The formula of distribution in Africa was the same as in the eastern churches: *Corpus Christi*, whereupon the communicant answered ‘Amen.’”

23. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of the Church and Dogma (1300–1700)*, 5 vols., The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, vol. 4 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 158–159. “What precipitated it was the contention, which seems to have been first advanced by Cornelius Hoen, that the ascension of Christ to the right hand of God precluded his bodily presence in the elements of the eucharist, since it was to the ‘advantage’ of his disciples and of the church in all ages that they should no longer have direct physical access to him. Johannes Oecolampadius, who was regarded as the modern originator of the idea, expanded on Hoen’s exegesis.”

24. Sasse, 31. “The Reformed theologians could, indeed, refer to Augustine as their authority, as Berengar and Wycliffe had done. They could do so also with regard to another fateful heritage which the great father left to the western church: the idea that the body of Christ, since it is in heaven, cannot at the same time be here on earth. It is noteworthy that this argument is the basis not only of the Reformed doctrine but also of the doctrine of transubstantiation.”

25. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 60 vols. (New York and London: Blackfriars with McCraw-Hill Book Company and Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1963), 58: 62. Footnote c.: “Actually, the body of Christ in the Eucharist is not locally there at all.”

26. Herbert McCabe, “The Real Presence,” *Clergy Review* 49 (1964): 750.

27. *Ibid.*, 751.

28. James Benjamin Wagner, *Ascendit Ad Coelos: The Doctrine of the Ascension in the Reformed and Lutheran Theology of the Period of Orthodoxy* (Winterthur, Switzerland: Verlag P. G. Kelly, 1964), 117. “Fundamental to the teaching of the Catechism at this point is one of the most distinctive and vigorously championed doctrines of orthodox Reformed Christology: the so-called *extracalvinisticum*. The designation itself was born in the fires of polemic controversy with the Lutheran divines.”

29. Heidelberg Catechism of 1563 a.d., Question and Answer 47, in Philip Schaff and David S. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, 6th ed., 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 3: 322. “Frage 47. Ist denn Christus nicht bei uns bis an’s Ende der Welt, wie Er uns verheissen hat? Antwort. Christus ist wahrer Mensch und wahrer Gott: nach seiner menschlichen Natur ist Er jetzt nicht auf Erden, aber nach seiner Gottheit, Majestät, Gnade und Geist weicht Er nimmer von uns.” English translation from Schaff: “Question 47. Is not, then, Christ with us even unto the end of the world, as he has promised? Answer. Christ is true Man and true God; according to his human nature, he is now not upon earth; but according to his Godhead, majesty, grace, and Spirit, he is at no time absent from us.”

30. Ulrich Zwingli, “On the Lord’s Supper, 1526,” in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, The Library of Christian Classics: Ichthus Edition (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 217.

31. Heiko Augustinus Oberman, “The ‘Extra’ Dimension in the Theology of Calvin,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21, no. 1 (1970): 54. “The charge of Nestorianism dates from the first stages in the debate between Lutheran and Calvinist theologians, and it is already presupposed by Question 48 of Sunday 18 in the Heidelberg Catechism, with which the *extra calvinisticum* is traditionally associated.”

32. Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 48. Schaff and Schaff, 322. English translation was provided by Schaff; the German text follows. “Mit nichten: denn weil die Gottheit unbegreiflich und allenthalben gegenwärtig ist, so muß folgen, daß sie wohl außerhalb ihrer angenommenen

Menschheit, und dennoch nichts desto weniger auch in dereselben ist, und persönlich mit ihr vereinigt bleibt.”

33. Wagner, 117. “Of central importance, however, is the motivating concern of Reformed theology in presuming to speak of the Logos as in some sense *extra carnem*. Basic for the interpretation of this doctrine is the critical differentiation made between the *extra* of separation and the *extra* of distinction or non-inclusion.”

34. *Ibid.*, 118.

35. Oberman, 60.

36. *Ibid.*, 61. “As far as I can see this is not a malicious Lutheran caricature, since the Reformed tradition itself is responsible for the idea that the ‘*non capax*’ is genuinely Calvinistic.”

37. Ulrich Zwingli, “An Exposition of the Faith, 1531,” in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 256. “For only that which is infinite can be omnipresent, and that which is infinite is eternal. The humanity of Christ is not eternal, therefore it is not infinite. If it is not infinite, it is necessarily finite. And if it is finite, it is not omnipresent.”

38. James T. O’Connor, *The Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 278. “In his humanity he has been marked out as Son of God in power (cf. Rm 1:3–4) and been given all power in heaven and on earth (cf. Mt 28:18), but that human body and soul are still limited by comparison with his divinity. Being everywhere present is proper to divinity alone; it is not, and cannot become, an attribute of humanity, even when the humanity in question is the very humanity of God. As a result, in his humanity—his human body, blood, soul, etc.—the Son of God can properly be in only one place at one time. There is no actual ‘ubiquity’ of Christ’s human nature.”

39. Oberman, 57. “The *extra calvinisticum* serves to relate the eternal Son to the historical Jesus, the Mediator at the right hand to the sacramental Christ, in such a way that the ‘flesh of our flesh’ is safeguarded.”

40. Luther is well aware of this concern when he pokes fun at it in his *Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper 1528*. AE 37:293–294. “The sixth argument: It is contrary to the glory of God. For Christ is in heaven in the glory of the Father, Philippians 2, and has his throne prepared not in the bread but in heaven. This argument awakens the same impression as the previous one, that Christ is imprisoned in heaven as in a jail or in stocks. For it would be disgraceful if he were with us on earth in all the pangs of sin and death; it is better if he leaves us to the devil here below and enjoys himself above with the angels! Isn’t this priceless? It is not contrary to God’s glory that he is everywhere according to his divinity, even in hell, and yet it is allegedly opposed to God’s glory for his body to be present in the bread, as if his body were nobler than his divinity! Away! Away! What a nice handsome spirit this is!” WA 26, 437: 11–19. “Der sechst grund: Es ist widder die ehre Gottes, Denn Christus ist ym hymel ynn der ehre des Vaters Phil. 2. Und hat seinen stuel nicht ym brod, sondern ynn dem hymel bereit etc. Dieser grund wil eben das der vorige, Das Christus sey ym hymel als ym kercker und stock gefangen, Denn es were schande, das er solte bey uns sein auff erden ynn allerley not der sunden und des tods, Es ist besser, Er lasse uns dem teuffel henyden und spiele droben mit den Engeln. Ists nicht köstlich ding? Es ist Gottes ehre nicht entkegen, das er nach der Gottheit allenthalben, auch ynn der hellen, sey, und sol widder Gotts ehre sein, das sein leib ym brod sey, als were sein leib edeler denn die Gottheit. Fort, fort, Es ist ein schöner, feiner geist.”

41. Henri Rondet, *The Grace of Christ*, trans. Tad W. Guzie (New York: Newman Press, 1967), 94. “Marvelously exploiting one of the hermeneutic rules of the Donatist Ticonius, he seeks Christ everywhere in the holy books—Christ, that is, the Word made flesh and also ‘the whole Christ,’ a bold formula that Augustine was the first to use.”

42. Augustine, *In Epist. Joan.*, 1, 2, in *Patrologia Latina* (hereafter MPL), ed. Migne, 35: 1979. “Illi carni adjungitur Ecclesia et fit Christus totus, caput et corpus.”

43. Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J.A.O. Preus (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 423. “For we do not believe in or seek a half-Christ or a divided Christ, nor only one part of Him, but the entire Christ, that is, His complete person, to whose completeness His assumed nature also pertains in the personal union of the two natures, which are neither separated nor divided nor rent asunder by any interval of space.”

44. Wagner, 120. “Decisive here is the distinctive notion, already encountered in a previous context, that not everything which may be predicated *in concreto* of the total divine-human person may also be predicated of the individual natures abstractly considered. Thus Christ the man or the person of Christ is indeed omnipresent, not, however, the humanity or the human nature itself.”

45. Wagner. “Expressed in slightly different form, *totus Christus*, or the entire theanthropic person, is said to be everywhere present, not, however, *totum Christi*, or whatever is in Christ, that is, both divine and human natures.”

46. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. John Allen, 8th ed., 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 2: 684, *Institutes* 4, 17, 30.

47. MPL 192: 804. “Christus ubique totus est, sed non totum.”

48. Oberman, 59. “Through his knowledge of these authorities, Calvin was in a position to establish that the so-called ‘*extra calvinisticum*’ was at least an ‘*extra scholasticum*’, and, after inquiry into the Greek and Latin fathers, even an ‘*extra Christianum*.’”

49. David Willis, “Calvin’s Use of Substantia,” in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984), 296, n. 20. “It is really the ‘*etiam extra carnem*’ and it should be called, if the term (which was polemically coined) be used, the ‘*etiam extra patristicum*.’”

50. Chemnitz, 454. “But these men are in the particular habit of quoting certain statements of Augustine, Cyril, Theodore, Fulgentius, and Vigilius, to the effect that the body of Christ, both in the union and in glory, is finite and circumscribed or local, and that by the very nature of the flesh it is not everywhere present, but that according to His human nature He has left this world with His body and His flesh, with His bod-

ily and local presence, and that He is not in the world and thus is absent from us who remain in this world. The ancient writers did use such terms as these.” Chemnitz, however, objects to the Calvinists applying these statements from the fathers to the Lord’s Supper, something the fathers themselves never did.

51. Hermann Sasse, “September Letter to Tom Hardt,” (1971).

52. Oberman, 54. “Not until considerably later and in response (as I believe) to the Calvinistic inclination to characterize the Lutheran Christology and especially its interpretation of the *communicatio idiomatum* as ‘Roman’, have Roman Catholic theologians also paid attention to the *extra calvinisticum* and its relation to Nestorianism.”

53. *Ibid.*, 62. “Looking back over the road we have traveled, we can see that the *extra calvinisticum* is not a peculiar Calvinistic idiosyncrasy in christological matters. In the first place, the *etiam extra carnem* is not an ‘extra’ peculiar to Calvin’s theology, but had been taught by the *doctores veteri* and *moderni* (the ‘sophists’) alike . . . the *extra calvinisticum* is not an isolated phenomenon but rather, like the top of an iceberg, only the most controversial aspect of a whole ‘extra’ dimension in Calvin’s theology: *extra ecclesiam*, *extra coenam*, *extra carnem*, *extra legem*, *extra praedicationem*. Here again Calvin stands in a scholastic tradition which, rooted in St. Augustine, was unfolded by Johannes Duns Scotus and became the central theme in late medieval theology, expressed as God’s commitment to the established order, *de potentia ordinata*.”

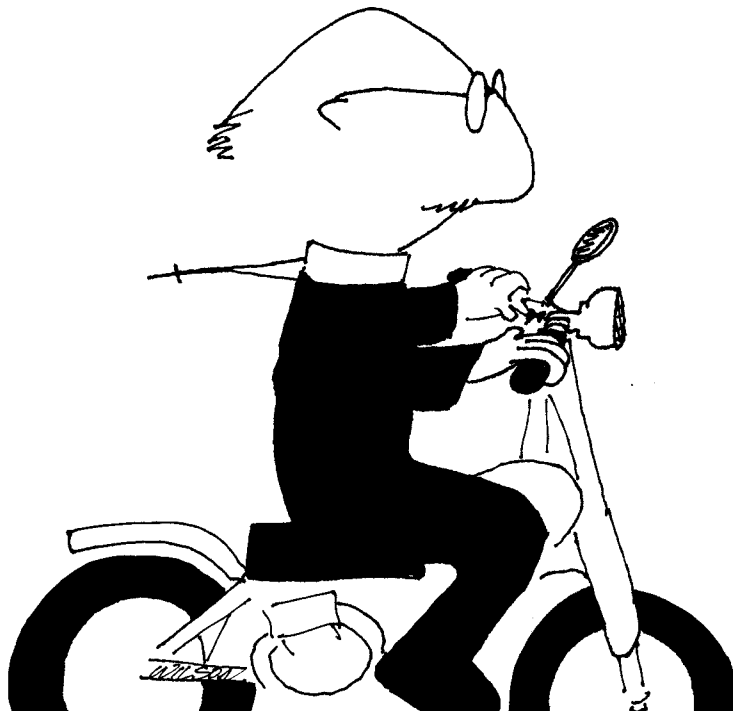
54. Elert, “Die Theopaschitische Formel,” 203. “Alliß was Christus thut odder leydet, hatt gewißlich gott than unnd gelieden.” (WA 10 I.1, 150, 22)

55. Elert, “Die Theopaschitische Formel,” 203.

56. Hermann Sasse, *We Confess the Sacraments*, trans. Norman E. Nagel (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), 64.

57. *Ibid.*, 62.

Inklings



Fritz frankly frightens the Ladies' Aid.

Justification by Grace through Faith

Do Wittenberg and Geneva See Eye to Eye?

ARMAND J. BOEHME



THE CENTRAL BELIEF OF CHRISTIANITY IS that sinful human beings are saved solely by God's grace received through faith in Christ, apart from the deeds of the law. "For by grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph 2:8-9).

One often reads or hears statements to the effect that at the time of the Reformation the Lutherans and the Protestants were united against the works righteous theology of Roman Catholicism. After all, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and many others rebelled against Rome. They were for justification by grace through faith, and the Romanists were for works. But were Luther and Calvin united when they spoke about justifying faith? What about Lutherans and Calvinists today?

FAITH: LUTHER & THE LUTHERANS

Our Lutheran Confessions declare:

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5.¹

In the Smalcald Articles Luther wrote,

The first and chief article is this, that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, "was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification" (Rm 4:25). He alone is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). "God has laid upon him the iniquities of us all" (Is 53:6). Moreover, "all have sinned," and "they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, by his blood" (Rm 3:23-25).

Inasmuch as this must be believed and cannot be obtained or apprehended by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that such faith alone justifies us, as St. Paul says in Romans 3, "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law" (Rm

3:28), and again, "that he [God] himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus" (Rm 3:26).²

These clear Lutheran statements on faith and justification became clouded over the years. The Augsburg Interim and theological controversies about the place of good works in the Christian's life contributed to confusion even among the Lutherans. This confusion ultimately had one group of Lutherans saying that good works were "necessary to salvation," and another group saying that "good works are detrimental to salvation."³

To deal with these and other controversies, our Lutheran forefathers wrote the Formula of Concord. They said,

we believe, teach, and confess unanimously that . . . the entire Christ according to both natures is our righteousness solely in his obedience which as God and man he rendered to his heavenly Father into death itself. Thereby he won for us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, as it is written, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by *one man's obedience* many will be made righteous" (Rm 5:19).

Accordingly we believe, teach, and confess that our righteousness before God consists in this, that God forgives us our sins purely by his grace, without any preceding, present, or subsequent work, merit, or worthiness, and reckons to us the righteousness of Christ's obedience, on account of which righteousness we are accepted by God into grace and are regarded as righteous.

We believe, teach, and confess that faith is the only means and instrument whereby we accept Christ and in Christ obtain the "righteousness which avails before God," and that for Christ's sake such faith is reckoned for righteousness (Rm 4:5).

We believe, teach, and confess that this faith is not a mere knowledge of the stories about Christ, but the kind of gift of God by which in the Word of the Gospel we recognize Christ aright as our redeemer and trust in him, so that solely because of his obedience, by grace, we have forgiveness of sins, are regarded as holy and righteous by God the Father, and shall be saved eternally.⁴

The Lutheran Confessions describe the following as one of the "blasphemous and terrible errors" they condemn: "that it is not only the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ, but that there is also within us a cause of God's election, on account of

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which he has elected us to eternal life.”⁵ Also rejected and condemned is the position that “our righteousness before God does not consist wholly in the unique merit of Christ, but in renewal and in our own pious behavior.”⁶

It is in this context that what is said about obedience in the Apology needs to be understood.

But that virtue justifies which takes hold of Christ, communicating to us Christ’s merits and, through them, grace and peace from God. This virtue is faith. As we have often said, faith is not merely knowledge but rather a desire to accept and grasp what is offered in the promise of Christ. This obedience toward God, this desire to receive the offered promise, is no less an act of worship than is love. God wants us to believe him”⁷

We must speak technically because of certain carping critics: faith is truly righteousness because it is obedience to the Gospel. Obedience to the edict of a superior is obviously a kind of distributive righteousness. Our good works or obedience to the law can be pleasing to God only because this obedience to the Gospel takes hold of Christ, the propitiator, and is reckoned for righteousness.⁸

The article in the Augsburg Confession entitled “The New Obedience” also attests to the fact that the obedience of the justified flows from Christ’s perfect obedience.

It is also taught among us that such faith should produce good fruits and good works and that we must do all such good works as God has commanded, but we should do them for God’s sake and not place our trust in them as if thereby to merit favor before God. For we receive forgiveness of sin and righteousness through faith in Christ, as Christ himself says, “So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy servants’” (Luke 17:10). The Fathers also teach thus, for Ambrose says, “It is ordained of God that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved, and he shall have forgiveness of sins, not through works but through faith alone, without merit.”⁹

Lutherans emphasize the scriptural truth that the obedience of the justified flows from Christ’s perfect obedience to the law, which is received in faith through the gospel. Christ’s obedience is ours in faith.

FAITH: CALVIN & THE CALVINISTS

John Calvin defined faith with the following words: “Hence Paul designates faith as the obedience which is given to the Gospel (Rm 1:5); and writing to the Philippians, he commends them for the obedience of faith (Phil 2: 17).”¹⁰

Calvin equated faith and obedience in his commentary on Romans 1:5: “We must also notice here what faith is; the name of obedience is given to it, and for this reason—because the Lord calls us by his gospel; we respond to his call by faith Faith is properly that by which we obey the gospel.”¹¹

For Calvin the aim of preaching is “that God may lead all nations to the obedience of faith.”¹²

Again and again Calvin ties faith and obedience together:

From these passages it is obvious, that even those who are not yet imbued with the first principles, provided they are disposed to obey, are called *believers*.¹³

For this reason, it [the assent of faith] is termed ‘the obedience of faith’ (Rm 1:5), which the Lord prefers to all other service, and justly, since nothing is more precious to him than this truth, which as John the Baptist declares, is in a manner signed and sealed by believers (Jn 3: 33).¹⁴

The Lord in delivering a perfect rule of righteousness, has reduced it in all its parts to his mere will, and in this way has shown that there is nothing more acceptable to him than obedience.¹⁵

For the sacraments are a kind of mutual contracts by which the Lord conveys his mercy to us, and by it eternal life, while we in turn promise him obedience. The formula, or at least substance, of the vow is, that renouncing Satan we bind ourselves to the service of God, to obey his holy commands, and no longer follow the depraved desires of our flesh This stipulation being included in the covenant of grace, comprehending forgiveness of sins and the spirit of holiness, the promise which we make is combined both with entreaty for pardon and petition for assistance.¹⁶

Calvin struggled mightily to set forth clearly the teaching that believers are saved by God’s election and the justifying work of Christ. However his other statements (some of which are recorded above) put such an emphasis on faith as obedience that Calvin is seen as teaching that faith is obedience. This puts a different cast on the doctrine of faith in Calvinistic and Reformed circles than is seen among the Lutherans.

***Calvin equated faith and obedience
 Faith is properly that by which we
 obey the gospel.***

The above emphasis in Calvin’s writings led one author to say, “Calvin’s concept of justification and its significance differs fundamentally from Luther’s. In Calvin’s theological thought not justification, but sanctification to the glory of God is the predominant motif.”¹⁷

“The basis of faith is therefore not, as in Lutheran theology, the universal promise of God contained in the Gospel, but the Holy Spirit’s activity evident in producing self-denial and observance of the rules for Christian living.”¹⁸

When writing of the doctrinal similarities and differences between the Lutherans and the Reformed, Herman Sasse said, “The essential character of the Lutheran Reformation consists of a rediscovery of the Gospel as the message of the sinner’s justification. The gracious promise of the forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake—this, and nothing but this, is the Gospel.”¹⁹

Sasse then wrote that it was “not by chance that Reformed theology since Calvin has had a decided predilection for the notion of ‘obedience of faith,’ a phrase used very rarely in the New Testament and by no means exhausting the Biblical meaning of faith.”²⁰

The reformed Westminster Confession of 1647 follows the lines of Calvin’s understanding of faith when it states, in part, that saving faith is believing to be “true whatsoever is revealed in the Word” as well as actions based “upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth.” Further faith includes “yielding obedience to the commands” of God. Finally the Westminster Confession says that “the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace” (*virtute foederis gratiae consequendis*).²¹

The Westminster Confession also ties together faith and obedience in other sections. Under Chapter VII—“Of God’s Covenant with Man” we read, “Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant (*foedus*), the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace (*Foedus Gratiae*): wherein he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they might be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.”²² And again under Chapter VIII—“Of Christ the Mediator” we read that the elect are eventually persuaded “by his Spirit to believe and obey”²³

Further under Chapter XV—“Of Repentance unto Life” we read that “it is every man’s duty to endeavor to repent of his particular sins particularly.” Under the Chapter XVI—“Of Good Works” we read that “good works” are to be done “in obedience to God’s commandments” as the “fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith.” Further in that same chapter the Confession speaks of those “who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life,” and yet they “fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do.”²⁴

Under Chapter XVIII—“Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation” we read that “it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure; that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance.” And further this same paragraph speaks of the Christian’s “sincerity of heart and conscience of duty.”²⁵

Calvin’s emphasis on predestination, obedience, and covenant sowed the seeds for the furtherance of the equation of faith with obedience in later Calvinistic theologians, though there are some who dispute this, and lay the genesis of the bilateral covenant (faith and obedience) solely at the feet of Heinrich Bullinger. For Bullinger, “God’s agreement with man included not only God’s promises but also certain conditions that man was obligated to meet.”²⁶ However, the evidence speaks against making Bullinger the sole source of this bilateral covenant idea that places a great deal of emphasis on human obedience and obligations in faith.

This equation of faith and obedience is seen in the later Reformed dogmatists. Their discussion begins with the idea of the two covenants—the covenant of works given to Adam and Eve, and the covenant of grace in Christ.

In the covenant of works God demanded perfect obedience and rewarded that obedience.

This pact is called the covenant of works because it exacts from all the condition of works, i.e. the perfect obedience of original holiness and righteousness which the Creator of due right demands of us, as much as we by our own fault are unable of ourselves to pay.²⁷

Because of Adam’s fall, human beings “could no longer be justified by God in conformity with the covenant of works by fulfilling the law.”²⁸

The Westminster Confession also ties together faith and obedience.

Because of the fall, God set up “a covenant of grace with man” but that “covenant of grace” did not replace the covenant of works, but was “added to it.”²⁹ Therefore “the obligation to obedience . . . lasts as long as man is God’s creature”³⁰

This covenant of grace

is a mutual *pactio* between God and men, by which God assures men that He will be favourable to them . . . because of the Son the Mediator. In turn men bind themselves to God to believe and to repent, i.e., to receive with true faith this sublime benefit and to afford God true obedience. [This pact is called a covenant] because God promises us definite benefits and bargains for obedience from us in turn³¹

In the pages that follow, this covenant of grace is described with terms like “contracted,” the “condition of repentance and faith,” “an agreement,” the “duty . . . of faith,” and “the law of faith.”³² One theologian describes this *foedus* [covenant] as the “conditioned promise persuading us to obey or assent.”³³

When describing the covenant of grace in the Old and New Testaments, the Reformed say, “The condition of the covenant is the same in both cases, namely faith, by which they obtained salvation.”³⁴ This covenant of grace in both the Old and New Testaments contains “a mixture of law and gospel.”³⁵

The emphasis on the “obedience of faith” is also seen in later Calvinistic and Reformed theologians.³⁶ “But the real heart of the doctrine of the immutability of the covenant of grace and so the more distinctive mark of correct confession is the doctrine of the persistence of the believer in obedience of faith.”³⁷

THE MEDIEVAL ROOTS

These emphases on covenant, obedience, and predestination had roots in medieval nominalistic theology fostered by William of Occam, Gabriel Biel, and many others.

In describing this nominalistic covenant theology David Steinmetz wrote, “The covenant which God has made with the

church is two-sided. It assumes responsibilities and obligations for both parties in the contract.” If human beings did the best that was in them, God would reward them with his grace. This nominalistic covenant theology was closely tied to predestination. “For the nominalists election is nothing more than the response of God to the foreseen behavior of man.” God’s work of election is “a secondary response to human initiative” therefore the nominalists placed a great deal of emphasis on “God’s justice” rather than his mercy. In this system, “man’s destiny was principally his own responsibility.”³⁸

This covenant theology flowed from the nominalists through Erasmus, Zwingli, Calvin, and Cocceius, to the Dutch and English reformers, and then to the New England Puritans.³⁹

Instead of diminishing with age, the influences of Scholasticism actually show a certain appreciation during the seventeenth century. In addition to the Scholastic doctrines of the previous century, which are now embodied firmly within Reformed orthodoxy, the Calvinists further transpose other doctrines, especially the doctrine of covenant, through Nominalistic words and concepts. The covenant is now said to involve an act of divine condescension, in which God capitulates to reward certain prearranged conditions The words, the phrases, the line of argumentation, the voluntaristic justification, and the federal conclusion are found to be almost an exact reproduction of Franciscan teachings on the self-same subject.⁴⁰

Though the “Calvinists are not Nominalists,” yet with respect to the doctrine of covenant, “the Scholastic influence is important enough for the Westminster Confession, the first Reformed confession to provide a separate article for the covenant, to employ in its leading paragraph a Scholastic justification for it.”⁴¹

the bilateral nature of the covenant of grace becomes evident as its conditionality is emphasized. These conditions are typically cited by the Calvinists as faith and repentance (or obedience) and thus the covenant is often called a *mutua pactio* or *confoederatio mutuus obligationibus*.⁴²

The “bilateral nature” of the covenant means that man is

compacted into a covenant of *mutua obligationis*, and is therefore accorded a decisive role in securing its promises. Man is required to fulfill what is due and to request thereupon his due. Of course, there is a feeble attempt to mitigate the force of these statements through the application of the doctrine of predestination, but such would only return the Calvinists to Augustine, not Luther. No matter how irresistible grace may be envisaged, God still depends here upon a condition wrought within man, in order to bestow His blessings.

The above evidence

bears witness to a Scholastic disposition in Calvinism and its covenant First of all, there was to be noted in the sacramental union discussions a distinct Franciscan construction, as they discounted any intrinsic nexus between the *signum* and *res significata* and conceived of their union *ex pacto*.

Second of all, more Scholastic propensities were exposed through the Calvinistic patronage of federal headship, exhibiting the depths to which the Franciscan *pactum* and voluntaristic *imputatio* had captivated their imagination. And finally, there became involved the covenant itself, as it sought to offset the disparity between the mundane and the sublime through a voluntary condescension upon God’s part *ex pacto*.⁴³

The “Franciscan doctrine of *pactum* becomes an integral aspect of the Reformed church’s statement of covenant theology.” This means that in Reformed theology as in medieval scholastic theology, God will regard

ex pacto the unworthy and feeble efforts of His creature toward piety. No merit or condition of finite man could possibly induce divine justice toward reward, apart from this antecedent commitment of God via the covenant to honor a certain performance with a specific reward.

“These Franciscan or Nominalistic overtones will emerge more and more so by the close of that century [the seventeenth] one could justifiably” call “these Calvinists Neo- or Protestant Nominalists.”⁴⁴

Another theologian has written,

The American experience can hardly be understood apart from Calvinist covenant theology. Simply put, its thesis is this: If we keep our end of the bargain, God will keep his. If we act as his people, he will act as our God. If we fulfill his will, he will bless us. If we violate his will, he will punish us.⁴⁵

LUTHERAN TESTAMENTAL THEOLOGY

Lutheran theology is a theology of testament, not a theology of covenant. Beginning with Luther, the Lutherans restored a proper biblical testamental theology to the heart of the church. Lutheran testamental theology is not bilateral but unilateral. God justifies without the help of human beings. Faith is the channel through which the sinner receives Christ’s grace and righteousness. Obedience is a part of faith, but does not exhaust the full meaning of faith. This testamental theology was central to Luther’s discovery of the gospel of God’s justifying grace received by faith apart from the works of the law.⁴⁶

Basil Hall wrote of the distinction between the testamental theology of Wittenberg and the covenant theology of Geneva and the other Reformed.

In spite of the sacramental realism of Calvin, whose theme was the *sursum corda* so that our souls are fed with the body and blood of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit when we eat the bread and wine, the Reformed Churches in their varieties like other forms of Protestantism (whatever the degree of official recognition of Calvin’s legacy) are in practice Zwinglian at the Communion. The tendency to Nestorianism at least latent in Reformed theology has played its part here. Also, remembrance has been given the further dimension of sealing and fulfilling the new covenant to

which promises for obedience are attached. In the seventeenth century and later this covenant or federal theology brought back again what Luther had sought to abolish, the trust in works righteousness which led to emphasizing that moralism which reduces the sacrament to being an appendix to or recognition of moral values attained. All varieties of federal theology are destructive of sacramental theology.⁴⁷

JUSTIFYING FAITH TODAY

What does all this have to do with today? The historic struggle over the definition of faith between Wittenberg and Geneva is still being played out today.

During the last century, Herman Sasse wrote that to equate faith with obedience as the theology of Geneva and its descendants has done is to confuse and mix law and gospel. If faith is turned into obedience, then the gospel has been turned into a new law.⁴⁸ If sanctification and justification are not clearly distinguished, if obedience is put in the same place as faith, then the law has replaced the gospel and justification has been supplanted as the central doctrine of Christianity. This turns Christianity into a congregation of obeyers rather than a congregation of believers, and Christ has become a new Moses.⁴⁹

Lutheran theology is a theology of testament, not a theology of covenant.

This equation of faith and obedience and the emphasis on sanctification over justification is readily seen in the current theological scene today. Even non-Lutherans admit that among the evangelicals “it is not the justification of the ungodly . . . but the sanctification of the righteous that is given the most attention.”⁵⁰

This emphasis on sanctification over justification has caused concern even in the evangelical camp. “The picture is grim. Justification is confused with regeneration. The necessity of repentance is ignored.” Some TV evangelists teach a justification “on the basis of obedience to God.” They teach that all of God’s justifying work with mankind is “conditional” on “our cooperation in that work.” As Pat Robertson put it, “Your future depends *entirely* on your obedience to God.”⁵¹

This confusion of law and gospel, this equation of faith and obedience, has led to a great deal of confusion in Christianity about justifying faith. In a survey done by George Barna, 57 percent of the Christians interviewed believe that “if a person is generally good or does enough good things for others during their lives, they will earn a place in heaven.”⁵²

Lutherans have not been untouched by the confusion noted above. A Barna survey indicated that 54 percent of Lutherans responded with a “Yes” to this question: “Can a good person earn his way to heaven?” Putting this in the perspective of the recent Lutheran-Roman Catholic and Lutheran-Episcopal agreements,

the same survey indicated that 58 percent of the Episcopalians and 82 percent of the Roman Catholics surveyed also answered “Yes” to the above question.⁵³

In the most recent survey done among Lutherans 56.7 percent said that “only those who believe in Jesus as their savior (sic) can go to heaven.” Only 47.8 percent of the Lutherans interviewed believed that a “child is already sinful at birth,” 60.1 percent believed that the “main emphasis of the Gospel is on God’s rules for right living,” and 67.1 percent believed that “most religions lead to the same God.” Further, 48.3 percent of the Lutherans surveyed believe that “people can only be justified before God by loving others.”⁵⁴

A group of predominantly ELCA Lutherans reached the following conclusion at a 1990 gathering entitled “A Call to Faithfulness,” held at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. There is a crisis of the gospel in our church as we face the modern secularized world. There is no agreement among us, nor in the ELCA, as to the specific gospel content of the church’s proclamation. This crisis has issued in a consequent collapse of the identity of pastoral ministry.⁵⁵

Only 39 percent of the ELCA Lutherans surveyed still believe that one is justified by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ apart from the deeds of the law.⁵⁶

A Lutheran theologian’s critical analysis of Pentecostalism can help us see how this emphasis on obedience and doing good works can distort the Christian understanding of faith.

By meeting the conditions, by doing the *more* that is required, we can move from the realm of Christ to the realm of the Spirit. We can move from sin to holiness. We can move from justification to sanctification, from first faith to total faith, from water baptism to Spirit baptism. One is not called to live by grace alone but is called specifically to live *beyond* the need for grace alone. We are called on to live out of our own strength rather than out of the strength of God’s gospel. Speaking in tongues in this system almost becomes a sign that we have moved beyond Christ and his grace for sinners to a higher and more advanced state.⁵⁷

The above statistics and statements are chilling evidence of the validity of the concerns some Lutheran World Federation theologians voiced already in 1963 prior to the Helsinki LWF meeting. They believed “that the Lutheran churches are now straying too much toward the belief that good works make the good man.”⁵⁸ Lutherans have wrestled with the doctrine of justification by grace through faith since the 1963 Helsinki LWF meeting. The Lutherans gathered there did not agree on the language for, nor on a definition of, justification by faith.

The LWF study document on justification issued by the LWF before the Helsinki meeting said, “Justification by faith remains a difficult and obscure doctrine.”⁵⁹

Time reported that the Helsinki LWF assembly’s desire to “produce a modern statement of Luther’s classic Reformation doctrine . . . ended in failure.” Further *Time* reported that “justification and its meaning for modern man came in for some severe questioning.” One Lutheran theologian, Dr. Gerhard Gloege, said that the doc-

trine of justification “is clearly an embarrassment” to the Lutheran church today. Justification came under attack for three reasons:

Because justification is “only vaguely comprehensible to millions” today; because “downgrading works [in matters of salvation] seems less acceptable than ever to self-justifying activist modern man;” and because “modern Biblical study makes it clear that justification is not, as Luther thought, the dominating theme of the New Testament.”⁶⁰

The official book on the 1963 LWF assembly noted that the justification document (Document 75) written at the Helsinki meeting “was referred to the [LWF] Commission on Theology for a final revision of the text The Assembly neither rejected Document 75 in its second version nor received it without qualification . . . but that before having the document sent to the Member Churches, it wanted revision to be undertaken by a group of experts at certain points in light of the discussions which had taken place.”⁶¹

One Roman Catholic observer noted that the Lutheran World Federation document on justification by faith drafted at the Helsinki LWF meeting no longer affirmed what Luther had affirmed.⁶² Dr. Johannes Witte, one of the Roman Catholic observers to Helsinki “argued that many modern Lutheran interpretations of justification, by stressing the life of faith rather than the initial encounter with God, are moving closer to Catholic doctrine.”⁶³

Some modern Bible translations have a decidedly Reformed theological flavor. Many of them help Christians equate faith with obedience.

And what does Roman Catholicism teach regarding faith? In the most recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church* one finds Paragraph 144, “The Obedience of Faith.” This paragraph is preceded by the most recent Roman definition of faith, “*By faith*, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer. Sacred Scripture calls this human response to God, the author of revelation, ‘the obedience of faith.’” Mary and Abraham are described as wonderful embodiments of “the obedience of faith.” And what is the biblical basis for the Roman equation of faith and obedience? It is the same as Calvin’s—Romans 1:5 and 16:26.⁶⁴

In recent years the ELCA has entered into fellowship agreements with Reformed, Episcopalian, and Roman Catholic church bodies. These agreements came about as a result of ecumenical dialogues and should not be surprising, because these denominations do have agreement in certain doctrinal areas, as is seen from the popular expressions of the faith in the surveys cited above, and in other writings.⁶⁵

Carl Braaten examined how the doctrine of justification by grace through faith fared in ecumenical dialogues before 1990. His answer is disturbing. The Lutheran-Reformed dialogues stated that there was agreement and difference concerning justification by faith because “this doctrine has played a more formative role” in Lutheranism than in the Reformed tradition. “This difference is due in part to the historical situations in which Luther and Calvin did their theological work.” The two groups also noted that justification and sanctification “have been distinguished differently in the two traditions.” However, the final round of the dialogues said that the two traditions were in agreement in these areas. Truly “a remarkable shift,” wrote Braaten.⁶⁶

Braaten notes that “Trent [Rome] would have no problem with these Anglican-Lutheran statements” on justification, but Chemnitz and all those true to the Augsburg Confession would.⁶⁷

Braaten concludes that the joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic statement on justification in 1990 does not “bear out the claim of having reached a ‘fundamental consensus on the gospel.’” He also notes that the Roman Catholics still include the “sanctification of the inner life through a voluntary cooperation with the grace of God” as a part of justifying faith.⁶⁸

Braaten writes that in all these dialogues the Lutherans have been affected by pietistic tendencies and “have not sensed such a great chasm between their own view [on justification by faith] and those views held by Catholics and Protestants.” He further states that Lutherans do not “stand somewhere between Catholics and Protestants” regarding justification by faith. Rather “most Protestants stand with Catholics” because they both teach “free will, in order to preserve the human role in bringing about salvation,” and both desire to integrate “love and good works into justifying faith.” He notes that most Protestants and Roman Catholics “are allergic to the concept of forensic justification.”⁶⁹

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Another factor in the current trend to equate faith and obedience is the role of modern Bible translations. Some modern Bible translations have a decidedly Reformed theological flavor.⁷⁰ Many of them help Christians equate faith with obedience.

A review of a recent modern Bible translation emphasized the fact that how the Bible is translated can affect the reader’s view of Christianity—as a religion of works or grace—whether faith is the receptor of God’s grace or obedience to God.

G[od’s] W[ord] New Testament is not primarily about God and what he has done for mankind; it is primarily about what men can and should do to please God . . . the focus [in Galatians 5] is entirely on human effort rather than on God the Holy Spirit, active and powerful in the lives of believers. We are told not to live by the Spirit but “as your spiritual nature directs you” (v. 16) . . . “if your spiritual nature is your guide, you are not subject to Moses’ laws” (v. 18) . . . “[the] spiritual nature produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (vv. 23-24). There may be no clearer illustration of the anthropocentric nature of GW’s New Testament than this section of Paul’s letter to the Galatians.⁷¹

How did this come about? Many modern Bible translations render the Greek words *τηρέω* and *φυλάσσω* with the English word “obey.” This injects the idea that faith is obedience into English texts of Holy Scripture, thus leading many to believe this faulty concept.⁷²

The following illustrates how a faulty translation can cause other problems.

It is important to note that Jesus did *not* tell His followers to “teach them all I have commanded you.” That would have put the emphasis on content. Jesus emphasized obedience. He told them to “teach them to *obey* everything I have commanded you.” The difference is neither subtle nor unimportant . . . it takes a single act of the will to become an obedient disciple . . . Evangelism is the process of moving an uninformed non-Christian to an understanding of the Good News—faith in Jesus Christ as Savior—and commitment to obey Jesus as boss.⁷³

The following quotations list the verses that are translated in this problematic way.

NLT—“If you love me, obey my commandments.” (Jn 14:15)

REB—“If you love me you will obey my commands.” (Jn 14:15)

Beck I & II—“If you have My commandments and obey them, you love Me.” (Jn 14:21)

GWN—“The person who has My commandments and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me.” (Jn 14:21)

GW—“Whoever knows and obeys my commandments is the person who loves me.” (Jn 14:21)

NIV—Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” (Jn 14:23)

NIVI—Jesus replied, “Those who love me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” (Jn 14:23)

CEV—“But anyone who doesn’t love me, won’t obey me.” (Jn 14:24)

NLV—“If you obey My teaching, you will live in My love.” (Jn 15:10)

AMP—“If they kept My word and obeyed My teachings, they will also keep and obey yours.” (Jn 15:20)

NEB—“They were thine, thou gavest them to me, and they have obeyed thy command.” (Jn 17:6)

GNB/TEV—But Jesus answered, “Rather, how happy are those who hear the word of God and obey it!” (Lk 11:28)

CJB—But he said, “Far more blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it!” (Lk 11:28)

ILB NT—Jesus answered, “Yes, but even more blessed are those who hear the message of God and obey it.” (Lk 11:28)

Phillips NT—But Jesus replied, “Yes, but a far greater blessing to hear the word of God and obey it.” (Lk 11:28)

NERV NT—But Jesus said, “The people who hear the teaching of God and obey it—they are the people who are truly happy.” (Lk 11:28)

NRSV—“and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mt 28:20)

LB—“And then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you; and be sure of this—that I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” (Mt 28:20)

Moffatt—“and teach them to obey all the commands I have laid on you. And all the time I will be with you, to the very end of the world.” (Mt 28:20)

AIV NT & Psalms—“and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mt 28:20)

NIRV—But if anyone obeys God’s word, then God’s love is truly made complete in that person. (1 Jn 2:5)

NCV—And God gives us what we ask for because we obey God’s commands and do what pleases him. (1 Jn 3:22)

Barclay NT—To love God is to obey his commandments . . . (1 Jn 5:3)⁷⁴

These mistranslations imply that Christians are not blessed if they do not obey, or that they have no real faith if they do not always obey! These mistranslations equate *faith* with *obedience*. This confuses law and gospel and leads to a faulty view of faith, which attacks the scriptural truth that Christians are at the same time both sinner and saint (Rm 6–8).

The above mistranslations also promote a works righteous theology which places greater emphasis on sanctification (human works) than on justification by faith (God’s work). In this view the gospel simply gives one the power to obey and to do good. To equate faith with obedience is spiritually harmful, for it will either lead believers to conclude that they are not Christians because they do not obey as they should, or they will think like Pharisees—that because they obey certain rules, they are better than everyone else, and they have it made spiritually and do not really need a Savior. Or they will conclude that they can help save themselves either in whole or in part by their faithful obedience and good works.⁷⁵

This is the theological confusion many Christians, and many Lutheran Christians, live with today.

CONCLUSION

Lutheran leaders have often wondered why Lutheran parishioners would leave the gospel orientation of justification by grace through faith for church denominations which emphasize faith as obedience and place such an emphasis on the doing of good works. Sadly, this is what happens in many places today.

But this turn from faith as the reception of God’s grace to faith as obedience is not a new phenomenon in the church. Paul addressed this in Galatians 3. There he wonders why the foolish Galatians have left the grace of justification by faith to return to the works-righteousness of the law. This is why the church needs eternal vigilance to defend the scriptural truths which truly save.

The proper view of faith is that it is the channel through which sinners receive the forgiving work of Christ. The sinner's believing heart trusts God's forgiveness and grace in word and sacrament. God's grace forgives sin and blesses sinners with Christ's perfect righteousness. Sinners are thus moved to live out their faith as godly Christians—which includes trying to obey God's word. Though obedience is a part of faith, there is much more to faith than obedience.

What is noted above should not be taken to mean that any mention of obedience in relationship to faith is bad. Nor do the above statements minimize the fact that God's law demands perfect obedience, and that faith in Christ should move Christians to give loving obedience to God's law.

However, the impression must never be given that believers must give perfect obedience or they will be confirmed in their sins.

Obedience belongs in the realm of sanctification, and not in the realm of justification. Sanctification is the fruit of having been justified by faith. Sanctification is the Christian's active life of faith that joyfully responds to the saving gospel. When speaking of saving faith, greater emphasis must be given to justification than to sanctification—without slighting the godly life of the Christian.

Whenever theologians mix, even in the slightest way, gospel with law, justification with sanctification, or grace with works, they end up endangering the clear biblical truths of salvation. Hence the church needs to emphasize Christ's perfect obedience and righteousness which sinners receive in faith, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit sinners will trust nothing other than the pure grace of God in Christ for their salvation. It is then that believers will be moved by God's Holy Spirit to live their faith in godly sanctified living. LOGIA

NOTES

1. AC IV (Tappert), 30.
2. SA, Part II, Article 1, 1–4. See also SA, Part III, Article XIII, 1.
3. FC SD, IV, 1, 3.
4. FC Ep, III, 3–6.
5. FC Ep, XI, 20, 21.
6. FC Ep, XII, 5.
7. AP IV, 227–228.
8. AP IV, 308, see also 309–312.
9. AC VI, 1–3.
10. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 1: 474.
11. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 48. See also John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 78–79; John Calvin, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 424–425; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 26–27; also 55, where Calvin notes that “faith is that by which we obey God.” John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 70–71; here Calvin ties “the obedience of faith” to his doctrine of double predestination.
- See also Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), 124–125, 132, 141–142, 235, 239.
- Concern has been expressed about the NIV translation of Romans 1:5 and 16:26; see Earl D. Radmacher and Zane C. Hodges, *The NIV Reconsidered: A Fresh Look at a Popular Translation* (Dallas, Texas: Redencion Viva, 1990), 73.
12. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 556.
13. Calvin, *Institutes*, 473.
14. *Ibid.*, 476; also 493, 494, 497. Significantly, Romans 1:5 is never quoted in the Lutheran Confessions, even when talking about obedience in relationship to faith.
15. *Ibid.*, 391.
16. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2: 477; also 491–492.
- The sacraments “are testimonies of grace and salvation from the Lord, so, in regard to us, they are marks of profession by which we openly swear by the name of God, binding ourselves to be faithful to him. Hence Chrysostom somewhere shrewdly gives them the name of *pactions*, by which God enters into covenant with us, and we become bound to holiness and purity of life, because a mutual stipulation is here interposed between God and us.” [Calvin, *Institutes*, 505–506]
- “Observe that the nature of Baptism resembles a contract of mutual obligation; for as the Lord by that symbol receives us into His household, and introduces us among His people, so we pledge our fidelity to Him, that we will never afterwards have any other spiritual Lord. Hence it is on God's part a covenant of grace that He contracts with us, in which He promises forgiveness of sins and a new life, so on our part it is an oath of spiritual warfare (*sacramentum spiritualis militiae*), in which we promise perpetual subjection to Him.” [John Calvin, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* (1:13) quoted in Wallace, 182.]
- Calvin uses the term “ordinance” to describe the sacraments. This puts an emphasis on our doing, our obedience, in the sacraments. [Calvin, *Institutes*, 2: 534–535.]
17. F. E. Mayer, *The Religious Bodies of America* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 213.

- “Reformed theology professes to be activist and therefore directs the Christian to seek the assurance of his being in the state of grace in a program of Christian activity rather than in the means of grace.”
- Reformed Calvinistic theology “stresses Christian sanctification in order to find an *a posteriori* basis for the assurance of being in the state of grace. Calvinism has fused these two views into a single controlling theme, the glorification of God” (Mayer, 198).
- “The central and controlling thought of Calvinism is Calvin's concept of the glory of God. It may also be stated in the form of the question: What must I do for the greater glory of God?” (Mayer, 206).
- “Calvin's undue emphasis on God's sovereignty endangers the centrality of God's love in Christ Jesus” (Mayer, 209–210).
- “The idea of obligation predominates. Calvin's ethics operates predominantly with such concepts as law, ordinances, commandments, obedience. An action is ethical and moral not because it conforms to an ethical standard, but because it is an act of obedience” (Mayer, 214).
18. *Ibid.*, 214.
19. Herman Sasse, *Here We Stand*, trans. T. G. Tappert (reprint St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), 111.
20. *Ibid.*, 122.
21. The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647. Chapter XIV, II “Of Saving Faith,” is quoted from Philip Schaff, ed. *The Creeds of Christendom*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 3: 630–631.
22. *Ibid.*, 617.
23. *Ibid.*, 622.
24. *Ibid.*, 632–634.
25. *Ibid.*, 639. “a legalistic trend permeates the entire confession, evident especially in the espousal of the ‘covenant theology.’ A legalistic spirit manifests itself also in the frequent recurrence of such terms as ‘duty to His revealed will,’ ‘to be under obligation,’ ‘obedience to Christ,’ ‘covenant,’ and in the imposition of Old Testament laws upon New Testament Christians . . . A modern Scottish theologian writes that the Westminster Confession is ‘more concerned with correct belief than with faith itself, and it must bear some blame for the emphasis so long laid on “soundness” of doctrine as the mark of the true believer. With its emphasis also on law, its view of the Sabbath, its legalistic trend, its doctrine of good works, it has to be admitted that it gave more place to the law than to the prophets’ . . . The Westminster theology maintains both divine sovereignty and human responsibility” (Mayer, 235–236).
26. J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1980), xxii. Baker feels that the emphasis on double predestination in Calvin overturns Calvin's strong tie between faith and obedience.
27. Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated From the Sources*, revised and edited by Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thomson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 283.
28. *Ibid.*, 316.
29. *Ibid.*, 316.
30. *Ibid.*, 318.
31. *Ibid.*, 382, also 387.
32. *Ibid.*, 383, 385, 398, 517.
33. *Ibid.*, 386, also 520.
34. *Ibid.*, 398.
35. *Ibid.*, 399. “Calvin's approach to the Bible appears to be legalistic rather

than evangelical and reveals a mingling of Law and Gospel." [Mayer, 208.]

36. *Ibid.*, 535.

37. *Ibid.*, 582.

38. David Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 12, 23, 22. For the Lutheran Confession's rejection of this improper view of election see FC Ep xi and FC SD xi.

Some historical information on the Franciscan covenant theology of late medieval Roman Catholic Nominalism is necessary in order to understand Luther's testamental theology. This covenant theology existed already in Duns Scotus (d. ca. 1308), William of Occam (or Ockham, d. ca. 1349), Robert Holcot (d. ca. 1349), Pierre d'Ailly (d. ca. 1420), Gabriel Biel (d. ca. 1495), and others.

It was in this theological tradition that Luther was schooled. See E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 134–136, 162–174 and Heinrich Boehmer, *Road to Reformation*, trans. J. W. Doberstein and T. G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), 140–143. Luther rejected this nominalistic scholastic theology. See AE 31, 5–16.

The work-righteous covenant theology that medieval Nominalism inherited from the Franciscans is tied to the phrases and concepts "*potentia dei absoluta*," "*facere quod in se est*," "*ex opere operato*," "*meritum de condigno/congruo*," "*habitus*," and "*ex pacto divino*."

Nominalism stressed God's absolute power. Though God has the power to act as He wills, human beings could trust God to act in certain ways because God had entered into a covenant or pact with the world and the church. This Franciscan/Nominalist covenant theology was bilateral. As long as human beings did the best in them, God was covenantally bound to reward them with His grace.

The Lord's Supper was a covenant meal that when mechanically performed would gain merit for those performing it. The Lord's Supper itself was not a true vehicle or means of grace, but was viewed as a sign that God was directly bestowing His grace—not in or through the sacrament—but alongside the sacrament when it was performed in a simultaneous yet separate fashion. The elements really are not united with nor do they bear with them Christ's body and blood. Thus Nominalists viewed the Lord's Supper in a more spiritualized or symbolic manner. It was this kind of work-righteous, symbolical covenant theology that Luther rejected with his testamental theology.

See Bengt Haeggglund, *History of Theology*, trans. G. J. Lund (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 191–193; Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963); Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250–1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), 33–42; Heiko Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought*, translations by Paul L. Nyhus (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 128–139, 143–144, 149–150, 173; James Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press/Belknap Press, 1969), pp. 129–131; Heiko Oberman, "*Facientibus Quod in se est Deus non Denegat Gratiam*," Robert Holcot O.P. and the Beginnings of Luther's Theology," in S. Ozment, ed., *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 119–141; E.H. Klotzsche and J. T. Mueller, *The History of Christian Doctrine* (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1945), 148; W. J. Courtenay, "Covenant and Causality in Pierre d'Ailly," *Speculum* 46, no. 1 (1971): 99–119; Norman Nagel, "The Presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar According to Luther," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 39, no. 4 (April, 1968), 227–238; David Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings*, 133–142, 197–208.

For an admission that this Nominalistic covenant understanding of the eucharist is the theology of Trent see Kilian McDonnell, *John Calvin, the Church, and the Eucharist* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 324–326, 335–339.

It is of interest to note that John Eck, Luther's Nominalist Catholic opponent, attacked Luther's use of testament in the Lord's Supper. Eck preferred a covenant understanding of the Lord's Supper, feeling that the testament introduced a forensic term into the Lord's Supper. See Vilmos Vajta, *Luther on Worship* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 39, fn. 44. It is of further interest that Yngve Brilioth also faults Luther on this same point (Brilioth, 101–103). This needs further study because the modern liturgical movement, following Brilioth, has adopted a covenantal understanding of the Lord's Supper. Has this caused a shift from a forensic view of the Lord's Supper?

The Lutheran Confessions specifically reject Nominalism in Apology iv. Melancthon also specifically rejects the Nominalistic concept "*ex pacto divino*" in Apology xii, 16–17. The Confessions also state that a covenant understanding of the Lord's Supper is a "secular view" of the sacrament which is to be rejected. See Apology xxiv, 68—Latin text. This text is correctly rendered into English in the Triglotta edition but not in Tappert. Strangely the Tappert text does not properly deal with the Latin text here. Hence the word covenant fails to appear in the translation.

39. Oberman, *Forerunners*, 136–137. Other sources also trace the flow of obe-

dience-oriented covenant theology from the nominalists through Erasmus, Calvin, the Jesuits, and into the Puritan divines: Oliver K. Olson, "The Revolution and the Reformation," in W. Lazareth, ed., *The Left Hand of God: Essays on Discipleship and Patriotism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 23–25; Francis Oakley, "Christian Theology and the Newtonian Science: The Rise of the Concept of the Laws of Nature," in Daniel O'Connor and Francis Oakley, eds., *Creation: The Impact of an Idea* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 61–80; John B. Payne, *Erasmus: His Theology of the Sacraments* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1970), pp. 97–99, 130–154, 228–229; McDonnell, 7–39, 160–161, 215, 227–231, 337–338, 344–345; Oberman, *Harvest*, 18–19, 426–428; Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-book of the History of Doctrines*, trans. C.E. Hay (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 2: 391–397, 406–407, 412–416, 427–449.

40. Stephen Strehle, *Calvinism, Federalism, and Scholasticism: A Study of the Reformed Doctrine of Covenant* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1988), 314.

41. *Ibid.*, 319.

42. *Ibid.*, 320.

43. *Ibid.*, 388–389. For the influence of nominalism on Calvin see Seeberg, 2: 45; Francois Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963), 18–19, 126–129; S. Mark Heim, "The Powers of God: Calvin and Late Medieval Thought," *Andover Newton Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (January, 1979), 156–166; McDonnell, 7–39, 156, 160–161, 371–372.

44. Strehle, 2–3.

45. Harold L. Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action—Evangelical Challenge and Lutheran Response* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1989), 21.

46. For Luther see AE 35, 86–87; AE 26, 296–304; AE 29, 213–214; AE 36, 36–57; AE 37, 304–341; AE 44, 55–57. For secondary sources see Kenneth Hagen, "The Testament of a Worm: Luther on Testament and Covenant," *Consensus: A Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology*, 8, no. 1 (January, 1982): 12–20; Kenneth Hagen, "From Testament to Covenant in the Early Sixteenth Century," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 3, no. 1 (April, 1972), 1–24; Kenneth Hagen, *A Theology of Testament in the Young Luther: The Lectures on Hebrews* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974); Vajta, 38–46; Armand J. Boehme, "Christ's Last Will and Testament: The Lord's Supper and Martin Luther," *The Lutheran Journal* 50, no. 2 (1983), 28–29; Basil Hall, "*Hoc est Corpus Meum*: The Centrality of the Real Presence for Luther," in George Yule, ed., *Luther: Theologian for Catholics and Protestants* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1985), 112–144.

For a contrast between the testamental theology of Luther and the covenant theology of those Lutherans (and others) believing faith to be "renewal" and obedience as well as those Lutherans adhering to modern charismatic theology see Carter Lindberg, *The Third Reformation? Charismatic Movements and the Lutheran Tradition* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1983), esp. 37–41, 70–71, 85–130, 152–154, 165–168, 174–178, 214–217, 224–226, 237–240, 260–266, 294–307.

For an extended exposition of the proper place of obedience in the faith life of a Christian see Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J.A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 105–140.

See also Philip M. Bickel and Robert L. Nordlie, *The Goal of the Gospel: God's Purpose in Saving You* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992). For a response see the review by Harold L. Senkbeil, "Review Essay: A Famine in Lutheranism," *LOGIA* 2, no. 1 (Epiphany 1993), 41–42. For a response to the review see "Colloquium Fratrum—Robert Nordlie: In Defense of *The Goal of the Gospel*," and "Joel Brondos Responds for *LOGIA*" *LOGIA* 2, no. 3 (Holy Trinity 1993), 55–57.

47. B. Hall, "Christ's Last Will and Testament," 139.

For exegetical studies which properly note the testamental definition of the term *diatheke* see: Ernst Lohmeyer, *Diatheke: Ein Beitrag zur Erklarung des neutestamentlichen Begriffs* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1913); Hermann Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, trans. W. Urwick (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark—Fourth English Edition with Supplement, 1895/1962, 549–553 and 887–891; J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 71–96, 246–257, 463–504; *The New Testament: God's Word to the Nations* (GWN) (Cleveland, Ohio: Biblion Publishing, 1988), 531–540.

This concern about properly distinguishing justification by faith from sanctification, grace from works, and law from Gospel lies behind the concern for a proper translation of the Greek word *diatheke*. Adolf Deissmann, a noted linguist, wrote that "no one in the Mediterranean world in the first century A.D. would have thought of finding in the word *diatheke* the idea of 'covenant.' St. Paul would not, and in fact did not. To St. Paul the word meant what it meant in his Greek Old Testament, 'a unilateral enactment,' in particular, 'a will or testament.' This one point concerns more than the merely superficial question whether we are to write 'New Testament' or 'New Covenant' on the title page of the sacred volume; it becomes ultimately the great question of all religious history: a religion of grace [testament] or a religion of works [covenant]? It involves the alternative, was Pauline Christianity Augustinian or Pelagian?" (Adolf Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the*

Graeco-Roman World, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan [New York: George H. Doran Co., 1927], 337–338.)

“Perhaps the most unsatisfactory use of ‘covenant’ in the church today is in the words of institution of the Lord’s Supper. The eucharist is no mutually agreed upon pact between Jesus and his followers. The wine and the bread do not signify the ratification of a covenant but they proclaim his death, a broken body and poured out blood. He gives his followers a new testament and he ratifies it with his death.” (Terence Y. Mullins, “Some Words About . . . *Diatheke* (testament),” *Lutheran Partners* (January–February, 1999), 19–20.)

Klaus Baltzer’s form-critical study of the covenant formularies in the Old Testament concluded that “there is a close association between covenant formulary and testament.” “Literarily, the ‘testament’ comprises the elements of a ‘normal’ covenant formulary.” Baltzer reports that in many of the Old Testament “covenant formularies” there is a close association between the imminent death of a prominent individual and the testament they will bequeath to their heirs. “In the Old Testament, the stylization of all Deuteronomy as ‘Moses’ farewell address’ is an impressive example of the use of the covenant formulary as a ‘testament.’” This covenant formulary as testament “continued to exert its influence far beyond the Old Testament,” most notably in literature like “The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” the New Testament Scriptures, and the early church writings. (Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings*, trans. David E. Green (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 137, 141–175.)

Baltzer’s careful scholarly work should prompt a re-examination of previous exegetical work, which rejected any testamental ideas in the *b’rith* of the Old Testament as well as in the *diatheke* of the New Testament, such as Johannes Behm, “*diatheke*,” in *TDNT* 2: 127, 131–132 and E. DeWitt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1956), 499–502.

48. Sasse, 134–135, also 129–130, 163–166.

49. *Ibid.* 137, 129, 118–119.

50. Donald Bloesch, *The Evangelical Renaissance* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1973), 37.

51. Michael Horton, ed., *The Agony of Deceit: What Some TV Preachers are Really Teaching* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 80, 141. See also 89–120, 140–150, 249.

52. Kent R. Hunter, “Church Faces Season of Change and Challenge,” *Ministry Innovations* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1999): 1.

53. Andrew Simcak, “How Do We Get to Heaven?” *Lutheran Witness* 119, no. 7 (July 2000): 26.

In another poll 73 percent of the Lutherans surveyed agreed “that if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others, he or she will earn a place in Heaven.” (Bruce Kueck, “Poll: Most Christians’ beliefs out of sync with Bible,” *Lutheran Witness Reporter* (July 2001), 11.)

Sixty-one percent of Christian teens surveyed also believe “that a good person can earn eternal salvation through good deeds.” (“Poll: Teen beliefs not consistent with Bible’s truths,” *Lutheran Witness Reporter* (December 2000), 7.)

54. *Lutheran Brotherhood’s Survey of Lutheran Beliefs and Practices*—Summer, 1998, 9–11.

55. “‘A Call to Faithfulness’: Working Group Reports—Ministry—Walter Carlson and Andrew Weyermann,” *dialog* 30, no. 2 (Spring, 1991): 163.

56. Martha Sayer Allen, “Churches reflect on members’ views,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune* (Sunday, April 1, 1990), 7B.

57. Richard Jensen, *Touched By the Spirit. One Man’s Struggle to Understand His Experience of the Holy Spirit* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1975), 115.

58. “LUTHERANS: Under Observation,” *Time* 82, no. 6 (August 9, 1963): 38.

59. *A Study Document On Justification* (New York: National Lutheran Council, 1962), 7. The document also said, “We are unable simply to take for granted that the Reformers were right and their opponents totally wrong.” Moreover, the LWF document said, “We cannot today casually dismiss the theological teaching of the Roman church as patently false, unbiblical and unevangelical.” The LWF struggle to properly define justification by faith was made more difficult because “the critical study of the Bible” among modern Lutherans has caused them to “see much greater variety and diversity among the biblical writers” (*Ibid.*, 7–9).

60. “Lutherans: Justifying Justification,” *Time* 82, no. 8 (August 23, 1963): 48.

61. Kurt Schmidt-Clausen, ed., *Proceedings of the Fourth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation Helsinki, July 30–August 11, 1963* (Berlin und Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1965), 11. The two documents on justification appear on 248–254, and 352–357. The floor debates are recorded on 254–263 and 357–365. The reports of the 26 discussion groups on justification are recorded on 438–475. The final document which was reworked by the Commission on Theology is on 476–482.

62. Peter Blaesser, “Helsinki Through the Eyes of a Roman Catholic Visitor,” *Lutheran World* (January, 1964), 64.

63. “Lutherans: Justifying Justification,” 48.

64. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: William H. Sadler, Inc., 1994), 39 ff. For ties between faith and obedience in the Nominalist theologian Gabriel Biel, see Oberman, *Harvest*, 79–81, 141, 177.

65. For concerns about the agreements the ELCA made with Rome see *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Confessional Lutheran Perspective* (St. Louis: The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, 1999); “Dissecting JDDJ,” *Forum Letter* 28, no. 12 (December, 1999): 3–4; Gene Edward Veith, “On Earth Peace?” *World* 14, no. 50 (December 25, 1999–January 1, 2000): 16–19; see also “Now No Condemnation?” *Ibid.*, 19–21; Douglas A. Sweeney, “Taming the Reformation,” *Christianity Today* (January 10, 2000), 63–65; James Arne Nestingen, “*Dialogue in dialog*—The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification—Anti-JDDJ: Visions and Realities,” *dialog* 39, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 140–141. See also Burnell F. Eckardt, Jr., “Lutherans and Rome on Justification: ‘Fundamental Consensus?’” *LOGIA* 3, no. 3 (Holy Trinity 1994): 43–52; Robert Preus, *Justification and Rome* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997).

For concerns about the fellowship agreements with the Reformed see *The Porvoo Statement and Declaration in Confessional Lutheran Perspective* (The Office of the President and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1999).

See also the materials and text which accompanies footnotes 12–39 and 50–77.

66. Carl E. Braaten, “An Examination of the United States Lutheran Ecumenical Dialogues on Justification by Faith,” in Carl E. Braaten, *Justification: The Article by Which the Church Stands or Falls* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 108–110.

67. *Ibid.*, 117.

68. *Ibid.*, 123, see also 104–107.

69. *Ibid.*, 125.

70. Michael R. Totten, “Reformed and Neo-Evangelical Theology in English Translations of the Bible,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (July, 1981): 193–207; see also David Saer, “Theological Observer: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy: Summit II,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (April, 1983): 155.

71. John M. Moe, “Review Essay: *God’s Word: Today’s Bible Translation that Says What It Means*,” *LOGIA* 4, no. 4 (Reformation 1995): 65.

72. No Greek-English lexicon defined either Greek word, *πᾶρέω* or *φυλάσσω*, with the English word “obey.” *A Lexicon Abridged from Liddell and Scott’s Greek English Lexicon*, revised by James M. Whiton (New York: American Book Company, n.d.), 704, 770–771; W.F. Vine, *The Expanded Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, ed. John R. Kolenberger III with James A. Swanson (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), 617–619, 795–797; Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Wm. F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 822–823, 876; Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Wm. F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich—updated by F.W. Danker (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 814–815, 868.

Eugene C. Chase, Jr., “The Translation of the Greek Words *tereo* and *phulasso* in the New International Version and its Implications for Theology Today,” *Lutheran Theological Review* 6, no. 2 (Spring–Summer 1994): 21–36.

73. Leith Anderson, *Winning the Values War in a Changing Culture: Thirteen Distinct Values that Mark a Follower of Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1994), 150. The NIV translation of Luke 11:28 (“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”) has caused a Lutheran Catechism to say, “*Note*: To ‘keep’ or ‘obey’ God’s Word of promise is to believe or trust it” (*Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986], 237).

74. NLT: *New Living Translation*, 1996. REB: *Revised English Bible*, 1989. Beck I: *The Holy Bible: An American Translation*, 1976. Beck II: *The Holy Bible: An American Translation*, 2000. GWN: *God’s Word to the Nations*—NT, 1988. GW: *God’s Word*, 1995. NIV: *New International Version*, 1984. NIVI: *New International Version: Inclusive Language Edition*, 1996. CEV: *Contemporary English Version*, 1995. NLV: *Holy Bible: New Life Version*, 1993. AMP: *The Amplified Bible*, 1965. NEB: *New English Bible*, 1970. GNB/TEV: *Good News Bible/Today’s English Version*, 1976. CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible*, 1998. ILB NT: *The New Testament of the Inclusive Language Bible*, 1994. Phillips NT: *The New Testament in Modern English* by J.B. Phillips, 1962. NERV NT: *The New Testament—A New Easy-to-Read Version*, 1978. NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version*, 1989. LB: *The Living Bible*, 1971. Moffatt: *The Bible: A New Translation* by James Moffatt, 1922. AIV NT and Psalms: *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*, 1995. NIV: *New International Reader’s Version*, 1996. NCV: *The New Century Version*, 1991. Barclay NT: *The New Testament: A New Translation* by William Barclay, 1968.

The following passages illustrate this problem in the NIV: Matthew 19:17, 28:20; Luke 11:28; John 14:15, 14:23–24, 15:10, 20; Acts 16:4; Galatians 6:13; 1 John 2:3, 3:22, 3:24, 5:3; Revelation 3:3, 12:17, 14:12.

For concerns about NIV translations relative to justification and faith see Radmacher and Hodges, 111–130.

75. “The doctrinal implications for a translation like this (NIV, 1 John 3:10) can only be described as calamitous. The translation at least *permits* the deduction that if a person does something wrong or feels ill will toward another Christian he is not really saved” (Radmacher and Hodges, 79).

I. Incorrect views of faith and the scriptures that refute those ideas:

1. Faith is mere intellectual knowledge or assent (Mt 8:29; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41).
2. Faith is a work I do (Eph 2:8–9).
3. Faith is equated with obedience to God’s laws (Eph 2:8–9; Rom 7:17–25; 1 Tim 1:15; 1 Jn 2:1–2).
4. I get faith as a result of my act (or someone else’s act) of praying the “sinner’s prayer” also known as the “prayer of conversion” (Acts 2:41, 8:26–38, 9:1–21; Rom 10:13–17; 1 Th 2:13).
5. The term “faith” is replaced by the term “relationship” Note: The scriptures *never* use the word “relationship” to describe the Christian’s faith, belief and trust in God! (Gen 15:6; Ex 14:31; Psalm 115:9–11; Pr 22:17–19; Jonah 3:5; Hab 2:4; Mt 8:10, 15:28; John 3:16, 20:30–31; Rom 1:16–17, 5:1, 1 Tim 4:10)
6. Saving faith cannot be lost (1 Tim 1:19–20).

ii. What faith is—a gift worked in us by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace (word and sacrament). Saving faith receives the blessings Christ won for us by his justifying work—his perfect keeping of the law, and his sacrificial suffering, death, and glorious resurrection. By faith we receive the perfect righteousness of Christ, the forgiveness of all our sins, God’s grace and mercy (Romans 5:1–2).

Saving faith is like a beggar’s outstretched hand. The beggar deserves nothing, has nothing to offer, and performs no work that makes him acceptable to the king. The undeserving beggar’s hand simply receives the free gift the king places therein. So it is with saving faith—it simply receives the freely given blessings Christ has won for lost sinners. All this is worked in sinners by the Holy Spirit. Whom we believe in matters, for “there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.” May God’s grace in Christ, received in faith, keep us as God’s dear children now and for eternity.

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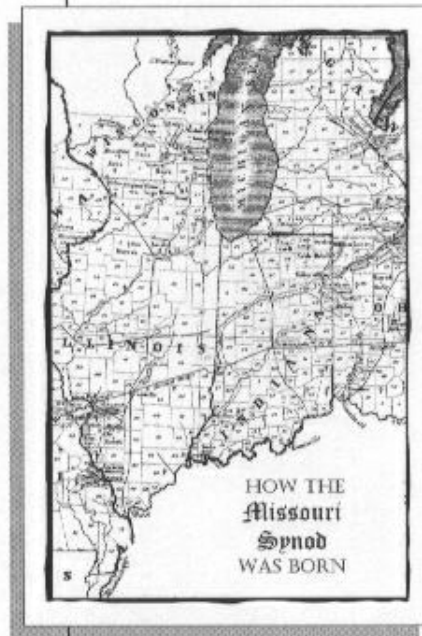
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Justification for the Dead?

Tensions Between JDDJ and Mass for the Dead

CARL E. ROCKROHR



THE JOINT DECLARATION OF THE DOCTRINE of Justification (JDDJ)¹ declares a consensus between Lutheran and Catholic theologians on the article of justification, while also looking for further clarification in the Lutheran church and Roman Catholic Church so that the life and teachings of each church may be faithful.

Our consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification must come to influence the life and teachings of our churches. Here it must prove itself. In this respect, there are still questions of varying importance which need further clarification. These include, among other topics, the relationship between the Word of God and church doctrine, as well as ecclesiology, authority in the church, ministry, the sacraments, and the relation between justification and social ethics. We are convinced that the consensus we have reached offers a solid basis for this clarification. The Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church will continue to strive together to deepen this common understanding of justification and to make it bear fruit in the life and teaching of the churches.²

JDDJ admits that there are further topics which do not have a consensus, including the topic of the sacraments. This essay intends to address an aspect of one of the open questions which JDDJ identifies, namely the mass, particularly mass for the dead. In doing so, a foundational contradiction between the theology of the JDDJ and Roman Catholic theology supporting mass for the dead will be highlighted. By focusing attention on this theological tension, it is hoped that an ongoing, thorough examination of the article of justification in light of all articles of faith and actual church practice, particularly the mass, might be encouraged.

THE PROBLEMATIC TOPIC OF THE MASS

It is well known that in the Smalcald Articles, Martin Luther gave his own opinions for Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, listing the mass as the greatest error standing in opposition to the article of justification.

The mass in the papacy must be regarded as the greatest and most horrible abomination because it runs into direct and violent conflict with this fundamental article. Yet, above and beyond all others, it has been the supreme and most precious of the papal idolatries, for it is held that this sacrifice or work of the mass (even when offered by an evil scoundrel) delivers men from their sins, both here in this life and yonder in purgatory, although in reality this can and must be done by the Lamb of God alone, as has been stated above³ (SA II, II, 1).

The fundamental article to which Luther referred was, of course, the article of justification. As Luther wrote in the Smalcald Articles, “The first and chief article is this, that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, ‘was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification.’ (Romans 4:25). He alone is ‘the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world’ (Jn 1:29)” (SA I, 1–2). JDDJ agrees with the Smalcald Articles that the doctrine of justification is of central importance⁴ and also with Luther’s definition that justification concerns forgiveness of sins only through faith in Jesus Christ.

Justification is the forgiveness of sins (cf. Romans 3:23–25; Acts 13:39; Luke 18:14), liberation from the dominating power of sin and death (Romans 5:12–21) and from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:10–14) . . . All this is from God alone, for Christ’s sake, by grace, through faith in “the Gospel of God’s Son” (Romans 1:1–3).⁵

If there is indeed agreement between Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians on the first and chief article, justification, then it is advisable to address the topic that the Smalcald Articles says is the greatest offense against the article of justification. Article xxiv in the Augsburg Confession and Article xxiv of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession both protest that the Roman Catholic mass contradicted the article of justification. Article xxiv of the Augsburg Confession charges that the Roman Catholics had taught

that our Lord Christ had by his death made satisfaction only for original sin, and had instituted the mass as a sacrifice for other sins. This transformed the mass into a sacrifice for the living and the dead, a sacrifice by means of which sin was taken away and God was reconciled. Thereupon followed a

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debate as to whether one Mass held for many people merited as much as a special Mass held for an individual. Out of this grew the countless multiplication of Masses, by the performance of which men expected to get everything they needed from God. Meanwhile faith in Christ and true service of God were forgotten (AC xxiv, 21–23).

Article xxiv of the Apology restates the case.

In our Confession we have stated our position that the Lord's Supper does not grant *ex opere operato* and does not merit for others, whether living or dead, forgiveness of sins or of guilt or punishment *ex opere operato*. This position is established and proved by the impossibility of our obtaining the forgiveness of sins *ex opere operato* through our works and by the necessity of faith to conquer the terrors of sins and death and to comfort our hearts with the knowledge of Christ; for his sake we are forgiven, his merits and righteousness are bestowed upon us (Ap xxiv, 11–12).

Many of these Lutheran objections have been discussed among Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians as evidenced in the papers of *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue III: The Eucharist as Sacrifice (Dialogue III)*.⁶ Concerning the eucharist as sacrifice, *Dialogue III* came to following consensus:

1.a. Lutherans and Roman Catholics alike acknowledge that in the Lord's supper "Christ is present as the Crucified who died for our sins and who rose again for our justification, as a once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of the world who gives himself to the faithful." . . .

1.b. The confessional documents of both traditions agree that the celebration of the Eucharist is the church's sacrifice of praise and self-offering or oblation

2.a. Catholics as well as Lutherans affirm the unrepeatable character of the sacrifice of the cross. The Council of Trent, to be sure, affirmed this, but Lutheran doubts about the Catholic position were not resolved. Today, however, we find no reason for such doubt, and we recognize our agreement that "What God did in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, he does not do again. The events are unique; they cannot be repeated, or extended or continued." . . .

2.b. The Catholic affirmation that the church "offers Christ" in the mass has in the course of the last half-century been increasingly explained in terms which answer Lutheran fears that this detracts from the full sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. The members of the body of Christ are united through Christ with God and with one another in such a way that they become participants in his worship, his self-offering, his sacrifice to the Father Apart from Christ we have no gifts, no worship, no sacrifice of our own to offer to God. . . .

2.c. Another historically important point of controversy has been the Roman Catholic position that the Eucharistic sacrifice is "propitiatory." Within the context of the emphases which we have outlined above, Catholics today interpret this position as emphatically affirming that the presence of the

unique propitiatory sacrifice of the cross in the eucharistic celebration of the church is efficacious for the forgiveness of sins and the life of the world. Lutherans can join them up to this point. *They reject, however, what they have understood Trent to say about the mass as a propitiatory sacrifice "offered for the living and the dead," even though the Apology of the Augsburg Confession concedes with respect to prayer for the dead that "we do not forbid it." We have not discussed this aspect of the problem; further exploration of it is required.* [Emphasis added.]

2.d. In addition to the growing harmony in ways of thinking about the eucharistic sacrifice, there is a significant convergence in the actual practice . . . the Second Vatican Council in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy has declared that the nature of the mass is such that the communal way of celebrating is to be preferred to individual and quasi-private celebrations.⁷

The papers presented in *Dialogue III* do seem to represent some consensus between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians involved concerning "sacrifice" in the Lord's Supper. James

Making of the mass a sacrifice of this sort denies two basic facts about the Christian life; it is God who gives to us; we have nothing to give and can thus only receive.

McCue's article "Luther and Roman Catholicism on the mass as Sacrifice"⁸ is very helpful because, as a Roman Catholic theologian, he analyzes Luther alongside Roman Catholic teachings. Thus, he identifies points at which there indeed might be agreement. He represents Luther's theology in like manner:

It is because Luther considers the word of forgiveness to be the heart of the sacrament that Luther now opposes the Roman conception of the mass as a sacrifice. If the mass is essentially the reception in faith of the forgiveness of sins promised at the Last Supper and won on Calvary, then it is, Luther charges, a basic distortion to make of the mass something that we offer to God. If it is a receiving it is not a giving, if a testament it is not a sacrifice. Making of the mass a sacrifice of this sort denies two basic facts about the Christian life; it is God who gives to us; we have nothing to give and can thus only receive.⁹

An example of the Roman Catholic response which McCue offers is this:

The life of the Christian community is shaped by all of this [previous discussion on incorporation of person through baptism into Christ's sacrifice and His body the Church]. Its

existence is structured by the one sacrifice of Calvary. The faith-act in which the community, celebrating the eucharistic memorial of Calvary, acknowledges and receives what was done for it and to it on Calvary, is itself an offering. That is, we receive [his emphasis] the fruits of Calvary in an act in which we say yes to Calvary by offering ourselves along with Christ to the Father. Note that this does not make of the mass a repetition of Calvary. The mass does not replace Calvary, nor does it reduce Calvary to the status of *primum inter paria*.¹⁰

It may be debated whether the charges of Articles xxiv from the Augsburg Confession and Apology still apply in such statements. However, as was noted in the italicized portions of 2.d. in *Dialogue III*'s statements above, McCue notes that there is no agreement on the question of the mass as a propitiatory sacrifice for the *dead*.

Thus the Mass is propitiatory in that it effects—as Luther and Trent both insist—the forgiveness of sins of those who participate by faith.

The difficulty thus focuses on the offering of mass for the absent living and the dead. It will be recalled that Luther carefully distinguishes between the mass proper and whatever prayers might be said by the community assembled to celebrate the Eucharist. Though he insists that prayer for the living and dead is a Christian responsibility, and though he is willing to allow that we offer such prayer to God in Christ's name, he wants this clearly distinguished from the mass. He does not want our understanding of the mass to be determined by the fact that in connection with our celebration of the Eucharist we offer prayers for the dead.¹¹

A focused discussion on the Roman Catholic understanding of mass for the dead is long overdue. Masses for the dead were, and remain, objectionable to Lutherans. I shall offer several points of argumentation concerning this topic, but first the matter of “prayers for the dead” needs to be analyzed further.

DIFFERENT TRADITIONS OF PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD AND THE AFTERLIFE

Some Lutherans might be surprised by the Apology's willingness to allow “prayers for the dead.” The full quote is found in the Apology's discussion on whether the Greek canon of the mass speaks of offering the Lord's Supper on behalf of the dead. Melancthon refers to the Liturgy of Chrysostom.

For after the consecration they pray that it may benefit the communicants; they do not talk about others. Then they add, “Yet we offer Thee this reasonable service for those who have departed in faith, forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, prophets” etc. And “reasonable service” does not mean the host itself but the prayers and everything that goes on there. Our opponents quote the Fathers on offerings for the dead. We know the ancients spoke of prayer for the dead. We do not forbid this, but rather we reject the transfer of the Lord's Supper to the dead *ex opere operator*. Even though they have support at most from Gregory and the more recent theologians, we set them against the clearest and surest passages of

Scripture. There is also great variety among the Fathers. They were men and they could err and be deceived (Ap xxiv, 93–94).

In his study *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead*, Knud Ottosen offers a number of observations that may shed light on the understanding of the “prayers for the dead,”

Masses for the dead were, and remain, objectionable to Lutherans.

which the Apology would admit as orthodox. First, Ottosen offers an overview of the theological and spiritual context of the development of the Office of the Dead between A.D. 800 and 1100 in the western church.

Thus, we must distinguish between three stages in the evolution of the concept of afterlife: First, the idea of death as rest or sleep until the Day of the Lord, according to which the purpose of celebrating the Office of the Dead during the wake was to comfort the Christian through agony and death. Second, the theories of an afterlife in which the souls of the departed (at least some of them) after having passed the First Judgment were subject to some sort of purification and sufferings for which prayers and sacrifices by the living were the only means of mitigation. Third, the Doctrine of Purgatory, where Offices and Masses of the Dead supplied the same need for a larger number of people.¹²

Within this general development of thought concerning the afterlife, Ottosen identifies several concepts of the Office of the Dead in western Christianity. The earliest documents he studied generally offered what might be described as pastoral care to the living who are grieving for the deceased.

The primary function of the ninth-century Office of the Dead is therefore the service after death, with death so close that it was felt natural to let the departed speak through the celebrant, or the celebrating community, in order to express his bitterness and dread as well as his repentance and faith. The concept of the afterlife was restricted to death as rest or sleep until the Day of the Lord.¹³

Within this primary function of the celebration of the Office of the Dead, “all the complaints of God's visitations in the readings and in the responsories must be understood as the dying person's final utterances before the ultimate delivering of his soul into the hands of God.”¹⁴

After this primary function of the Office of the Dead, Ottosen identifies a group of documents that he describes as the “French-Roman” concept of the Office of the Dead.

Granted that some sort of purgation of the soul in the afterlife is the background for the celebration of the Office of the Dead, according to the French-Roman concept from the eleventh century onwards, the stress automatically lies on other parts of the texts than when the background is the primary function. On this background it is not the dying person who speaks, but the soul suffering constant torments in the span of time between physical death and the Final Judgment. It is for this soul (or for these souls) that the monastic community prays to the Lord for release and forgiveness.¹⁵

The spread of offices representing this French-Roman concept is almost exclusively known in an area which is limited to England, to France (i.e. Cambresis and Flanders to the North) to the West and South of Lotharinga, West of the river Rhone (except Provence) and from the thirteenth century also in Rome.¹⁶

Ottosen also identifies a second group of documents which he labels the “German Concept” of the Office of the Dead.

This office represents a totally different spirituality from the one from Cluny [Ottosen had earlier traced the French-Roman concept to Cluny]. There is a clear distinction between what the readings say and what the responsories and versicles represent. The readings proclaim the Word of God. That man shall remember his God, while he lives, because he is the Lord, who will redeem the dead and awake those that sleep in the dust through Christ, the first fruit of those who shall regain life. Christ is the redeemer, the vindicator, he is the romanesque king on the cross, who breaks the doors of hell and liberates the dead. The responsories and versicles for their part give voice to the confession of faith in the redeemer on behalf of the departed; to his confession of sin committed [sic] during his earthly life and to his prayers for forgiveness on the Final Day and liberation from eternal damnation. There is no trace of any suffering of the soul, it is not situated in an afterlife in which God is pledged to mitigate the punishments of the suffering soul. On the contrary, the soul is sleeping in the dust of the earth waiting for its change to come. All prayers concentrate on what may happen at the Final Judgment, if the Lord should judge the departed according to his acts, because the departed knows perfectly well that he has done nothing worthy in the face of the Lord.¹⁷

Ottosen notes that the German concept of the office, which was located in the regions of “Cambresis, Flanders, The Netherlands, Germany, North and Central Italy (till the twelfth century) and Scandinavia . . . almost always regards death as a sleep and indicates a confident belief in the resurrection at the end of time.”¹⁸

The difference between Ottosen’s groupings of the French-Roman concept and the German concept of Offices of the Dead stand in sharp contrast to one another. In the “French-Roman concept” the dead soul is yet suffering torments for sin. In the “German concept” the soul rests in the victory of Christ, who is redeemer, vindicator, king, breaker of hell’s door and liberator

over death. Even a cursory reading of Luther’s explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed in the Small Catechism leads to a rather straightforward (though perhaps yet unstudied) first judgment that Luther’s theological position was related to what Ottosen has identified as the “German concept” of the Office of the Dead.

In the “German concept” the soul rests in the victory of Christ, who is redeemer, vindicator, king, breaker of hell’s door and liberator over death.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to definitively identify which concept of the afterlife and Office of the Dead related by Ottosen that Luther himself confessed. Nor does Ottosen’s study provide clarity about which of the divergent traditions of the Office of the Dead and “prayers for the dead” were in view by Melancthon when he wrote “we do not forbid prayers for the dead.” It is most likely, however, that “prayers for the dead” for the Lutherans were rooted within the “German concept” of the afterlife and the Office of the Dead. In that case, however, the concession that “prayers for the dead” are allowed by the Lutherans in the Apology reflects a concept of the afterlife and an Office of the Dead that stands in opposition to the concepts of the afterlife, and Office of the Dead, that the theologians representing Rome held. At the least Ottosen’s study provides a probable interpretation of the phrase “prayers for the dead,” which the Lutherans had approved in a way that remained consistent with the theology of the Reformation.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE MASS FOR THE DEAD

Luther called the Roman mass “the greatest and most horrible abomination because it runs into direct and violent conflict” (SA II, II, 1) with the article of justification, a position which leads to the following quandary: if any consensus between Lutherans and Roman Catholics in the doctrine of justification is going to endure, Luther’s charge against the Roman mass must be answered; furthermore, if *JDDJ* is going to stand as an honest consensus of agreement, Luther’s condemnation of the Roman mass in the Smalcald Articles must be shown to be no longer valid.

Since *Dialogue III* admitted that the mass as a propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead was an undiscussed issue, we will now focus on this topic, especially on the mass for the dead. It has already been shown above that according to Ottosen’s research the Apology’s assent to allow “prayers for the dead” does not necessarily negate the Lutheran argument against mass for the dead. On the contrary, Ottosen has provided data that likely reveals a wide divergence of what the Lutheran reformers and the Roman Catholics thought “prayers for the dead” meant or were meant to accomplish, especially in the context of masses for the dead.

EX OPERE OPERATO CORRECTLY UNDERSTOOD

It is first necessary to dispatch any notion that Luther was condemning only a magical understanding of Roman mass and that he was therefore only condemning a caricature of the Roman mass. Carl Wisløff notes:

It is sometimes said that Luther contended against the sacrifice of the mass as a magic conception. Or, if it is not taken to that extreme, it is said that he turned against the conception of the sacrifice of the mass as a meritorious action whose proper effect was thought to come to pass in and through the external action of the priest, without any thought of faith.¹⁹

Wisløff admonishes Protestants for frequently misunderstanding the Roman Catholic *ex opere operato* work of the sacrament.

This doctrine aims to express two things. Negatively, the sacramental grace is not given on the basis of the subjective worthiness of the officiant or the recipient. Positively, the sacramental grace is *occasioned* [emphasis his] by the validly administered sacramental sign. But this doctrine will not disregard the subjective worthiness (*opus operantis*). On the contrary, the subjective factor is expressly demanded in that the degree of that grace which takes effect *ex opere operato* is received “according to each one’s own attitude and cooperation.” Grace is given *ex opere operato* to the person who does not place a barrier in the way, that is, to the person who does not have the evil intention of continuing to sin. In order that a person may benefit from the grace occasioned by *ex opera operato* by the sacrament, it is necessary that he have a measure of proper *dispositio*, and the smallest measure for this *dispositio* is indicated by the expression “not to set up a barrier.”²⁰

According to Wisløff, *ex opere operato* is therefore not to mean a magical, automatic rite, but rather places the essential effectiveness of the sacrament upon the proper administration and not upon the worthiness of the officiant or recipient. However, Wisløff notes that Roman theology of *ex opere operato* states that benefit comes to the recipient only insofar as he or she does not resist or put up a barrier.

If Luther had been taking exception only to a magical conception which held that the actions carried out with correct ritual automatically induced the right spiritual effects, his battle would not have been difficult. For then he would have had the support of the church’s entire traditional theology. But Luther strikes Catholicism at its very heart: the conviction that there is a continuity between nature and the supernatural, the belief that sacramental grace can correspond with the capacities of the human soul, even though these can express themselves only weakly. It is against this conviction that Luther places his demand for faith. In other words, the necessity of faith is not merely asserted in contrast to ritualistic externalism and magical sacramentalism, but in contrast to a false anthropology and an unbiblical idea of piety.²¹

The formula *ex opere operato* allows the soul to seek the sacrament apart from promise and faith. Wisløff gives an example of a soul operating under the theology of *ex opere operato*.

I do not control the promise and faith; here God alone is Lord. But I am able to do something with *non ponere obicem* [not set up a barrier]; it is part of the work of salvation which comes within the power of the free will. The mass as *opus operatum* is not so much superstition as it is works righteousness, and it is as such that Luther fought against it.²²

MELANCHTHON’S USE OF EX OPERE OPERATO IN APOLOGY XXIV

It is instructive to note Melanchthon’s argumentation concerning the mass. First, in Article xxiv of the Augsburg Confession, Melanchthon defends against the charges that the Lutherans had abolished the mass. He maintains that changes have been made to correct the abuses of the mass, but the Lutherans have retained the mass. One of the changes has been to use German in the mass.

Meanwhile no conspicuous changes have been made in the public ceremonies of the mass, except that in certain places German hymns are sung in addition to the Latin responses for the instruction and exercise of the people (AC xxiv, 2).

The Roman Catholic theologians respond to this Lutheran change to the mass in the *Confutation*. The *Confutation* disapproves of the use of the German language. It argues that the priest

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belongs to the entire church, not just the local surroundings. Moreover, it is good for the people to listen to Latin.

Experience teaches that among the Germans there has been greater devotion at mass in Christ’s believers who do not understand the Latin language than in those who today hear the mass in German. . . . Neither is it necessary that he hears or understands all the words of the mass, and even attend to it intelligently; for it is better to understand and to attend to its end, because the mass is celebrated in order that the Eucharist may be offered in memory of Christ’s passion.²³

Melanchthon picks up on this argumentation against the Lutheran use of the German language in Apology xxiv. He uses it to introduce the topic of *ex opere operato*, which then becomes a repeated point of contention in Apology xxiv.

In a long harangue about the use of Latin in the mass, our clever opponents quibble about how a hearer who is ignorant of the faith of the church benefits from hearing a mass that he does not understand. Apparently they imagine that mere hearing is a beneficial act of worship even where there is no understanding (Ap xxiv, 2–3).

The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the Word may receive faith and fear and may also pray. Therefore we keep Latin for the sake of those who study and understand it, and we insert German hymns to give the common people something *to learn that will arouse their faith and fear*. This has always been the custom in the churches. Though German hymns have varied in frequency, yet almost everywhere the people sang in their own language. No one has ever written or suggested that men benefit from hearing lessons they do not understand, or from ceremonies that do not teach or admonish, simply *ex opere operato*, by the mere doing or observing. Out with such pharisaic ideas! (Ap xxiv, 4–5 [Emphasis added]).

No one has ever before suggested, as the *Confutation* says, that hearing the mass in a language one does not understand is beneficial. The Lutheran reformers have introduced German hymns to teach and admonish. The reformers' use of the German

His critique of ex opere operato rejects a separation of the mass from faith.

in the mass is to “arouse their faith and fear.” Melanchthon shows that the Lutheran reformers sought to increase faith, while the Roman *Confutation* defended the *use of the mass without understanding*. For Melanchthon, the use of intelligible language arouses fear and faith. Conversely, his critique of *ex opere operato* rejects a separation of the mass from faith. Wisløff's observations about Luther's objection to the sacrifice of the mass reveals Luther to be in agreement with Melanchthon's fundamental point in Apology xxiv. We again look at Melanchthon's argumentation in paragraphs 11–12.

In our Confession we have stated our position that the Lord's Supper does not grant *ex opere operato* and does not merit for others, whether living or dead, forgiveness of sins or of guilt or punishment *ex opere operato*. This position is established and proved by the impossibility of our obtaining the forgiveness of sins *ex opere operato* through our works and by the necessity of faith to conquer the terrors of sins and death and to comfort our hearts with the knowledge of Christ; for his sake we are forgiven, his merits and righteousness are bestowed upon us. “Since we are justified by faith, we

have peace” (Romans 5:1) This is so firm and sure that it can prevail against all the gates of hell.

Justification comes by faith, but the *Confutation* has argued that it is not necessary to understand what is being said in the mass. It is only necessary to observe the mass. This contention the Apology rejects since the mere work of observing the mass cannot conquer the terrors of sin and death. It needs to be received by faith. Melanchthon charges that the mass has clearly turned into a work and hence does not depend upon faith. Having been taught by the church, the people have thoroughly taken up this improper understanding and use of the mass.

No sane person can approve this pharisaic and pagan notion about the working of the Mass *ex opere operato*. Yet this notion has taken hold among the people and infinitely multiplied the Masses. With the work of these Masses they think they can placate God's wrath, gain the remission of guilt and punishment, secure whatever they need in this life, and even free the dead (Ap xxiv, 13).

The unhappy consequence of this point of view is that even the observing of the mass with one's eyes is not necessary, since the mass may be applied to the *dead*. When Melanchthon discusses mass for the dead even more specifically in Ap xxiv, he is compelled to emphasize even more definitively that the mass is not a work to make satisfaction, but it is forgiveness to be received by faith.

Now we shall pass over the sort of proofs our opponents have for purgatory, the sort of penalties they suppose purgatory has, the reason they adduce in support of the doctrine of satisfaction, which we have refuted earlier. In reply we shall say only this much. Surely the Lord's Supper was instituted for the sake of forgiving guilt. For it offers the forgiveness of sins, which necessarily implies real guilt. Nevertheless, it does not make satisfaction for guilt; otherwise, the Mass would be on a par with the death of Christ. *The forgiveness of guilt can be accepted only by faith. Therefore the Mass is not a satisfaction but a promise and a sacrament requiring faith.* (Ap xxiv, 90 [Emphasis added]).

Indeed, the bitterest kind of sorrow must seize all the faithful if they ponder the fact that the Mass has largely been transferred to the dead and to satisfactions for penalties. This is the abolition of the daily sacrifice in the church. It is the kingdom of tyrants who transferred the blessed promises of the forgiveness of guilt and faith to vain ideas of satisfactions (Ap xxiv, 91).

Melanchthon does not want to argue about purgatory any longer. Here again, the two opposing concepts of the afterlife and the Office of the Dead between the Lutheran reformers and the Roman Catholic theologians, as suggested by Ottosen's study, might be in the background. But whatever the Roman Catholics' concept of the afterlife, purgatory, and the “prayers for the dead” may be, Melanchthon does not want the line of argumentation to rest on those human traditions. Instead, he argues about the essence of

the mass. “Surely, the Lord’s Supper was instituted for the sake of forgiving sins.” The proper use of the mass is faith receiving forgiveness. The *ex opere operato* use of the mass, which has been argued by the *Confutation*, does not require faith to understand and receive the words of forgiveness.

There is no reason to believe that the dead can hear the mass, eat the body, drink the blood, or even watch the mass with their eyes.

The argumentation is clear concerning mass for the dead. “Since the mass is not a satisfaction for either punishment or guilt [but instead is forgiveness], *ex opere operato* and without faith, it follows that it is useless to transfer it to the dead” (Ap, xxiv, 92). Either the mass is a work of satisfaction not requiring faith that can be transferred to the dead, or the mass is for forgiveness received by faith alone, and therefore unable to benefit the dead. There is no reason to believe that the dead can hear the mass, eat the body, drink the blood, or even watch the mass with their eyes. Yet Jesus instituted the mass with words, bread, and wine. How, one might ask, can a dead person receive the mass as Jesus instituted it? There is no way for the mass to reach the dead person’s mind, body, or soul. There is no role for faith that receives forgiveness and thus justifies the sinner in the mass for the dead. Thus, according to the Lutheran critique, the Roman doctrine of the mass for the dead overturns the Lord’s Supper according to Christ’s institution at all points. No promise of Jesus is heard, no body and blood are received, no faith is strengthened, and no forgiveness is received through faith.

MASS FOR THE DEAD AND THE JOINT DECLARATION

It is clear that the Lutheran reformers could see no place for faith in the mass for the dead. To cling to this use of the mass was to make the mass turn against Jesus Christ. In the mass for the dead faith did not receive the body and blood for forgiveness of sins and for justification. Rather, the mass is done for the dead apart from faith and there is no place to receive forgiveness.

All that remains in our discussion is for contemporary Roman Catholic doctrine to speak for itself. For purposes of an up-to-date and authoritative exposition of doctrine the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is consulted. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), with the 1997 English corrections, says,

1414 As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God.²⁴

What does the CCC mean by the word “reparation?” “Reparation” occurs thirteen times in the CCC, including the above occurrence.²⁵ From these occurrences the meaning of

“reparation” as it refers to the eucharist is not difficult to discern. The first two occurrences in paragraphs 614 and 616 refer to the reparation work done by Jesus Christ for our disobedience. The next occurrence of “reparation” is reparation in the eucharist for the living and the dead in paragraph 1414 as quoted above. All the remaining occurrences of “reparation” refer to the work of satisfaction by a person to repay for his offenses. Two examples, from paragraphs 1491 and 2412, will illustrate the use of the word “reparation” in the remaining 10 occurrences.

1491 The sacrament of Penance is a whole consisting in three actions of the penitent and the priest’s absolution. The penitent’s acts are repentance, confession or disclosure of sins to the priest, and the intention to make *reparation* and do works of *reparation*.²⁶

2412 In virtue of commutative justice, *reparation* for injustice committed requires the restitution of stolen goods to their owner:

Jesus blesses Zacchaeus for his pledge: “If I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”¹⁹² Those who, directly or indirectly, have taken possession of the goods of another, are obliged to make restitution of them, or to return the equivalent in kind or in money, if the goods have disappeared, as well as the profit or advantages their owner would have legitimately obtained from them. Likewise, all who in some manner have taken part in a theft or who have knowingly benefited from it—for example, those who ordered it, assisted in it, or received the stolen goods—are obliged to make restitution in proportion to their responsibility and to their share of what was stolen.²⁷

The word “reparation” in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is clearly a word referring to a work done to pay back something owed, to make good some debt, injustice or theft. According to paragraph 1414 as quoted above, the eucharist is “reparation” for sins. Whether that work of “reparation” is Christ’s work of reparation or the reparation work as required from a penitent is not entirely clear. Further, the reparation is “offered.” Who is doing the offering for whom? According to paragraph 1410 the “reparation” is Christ’s reparation and it is Christ in the person of the priest doing the offering of the reparation.

1410 It is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. And it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice.²⁸

Despite the confusing use of “reparation” in paragraph 1414, it will be assumed for sake of argument that the CCC intends to say that it is Christ’s “reparation” work that is offered to benefit the dead. Yet the Lutheran objection still stands. The Lord’s Supper is forgiveness and “[t]he forgiveness of guilt can be accepted only by faith. Therefore the Mass is not a satisfaction but a promise and a sacrament requiring faith.” (Ap xxiv, 90) The question still remains today: *How does the dead person receive forgiveness, or even “spiritual benefits,” by faith?* If in the mass faith alone does not receive

Christ's forgiveness, then the mass is an attempt to do something, or at least cooperate in not resisting, to make the "reparation" effective. If so, the saving work of Jesus Christ is not received as the sole foundation for forgiveness, but human work is added. The consensus statement of justification in *JDDJ* is therefore contradicted.

Justification is the forgiveness of sins (cf. Romans 3:23–25; Acts 13:39; Luke 18:14), liberation from the dominating power of sin and death (Romans 5:12–21) and from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:10–14) . . . All this is from God alone, for Christ's sake, by grace, through faith in "the Gospel of God's Son" (Romans 1:1–3).²⁹

CONCLUSION

This essay was an attempt to bring to the forefront for examination the doctrine of the mass for the dead in the light of the *Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification*. The mass for the dead was an admittedly undiscussed issue in *Dialogue III*, even though the mass for the dead remains objectionable to Lutherans. Knud Ottosen's study of the Latin Office of the Dead reveals that the Apology's allowance for "prayers of the dead," if understood in the

light of the "German concept" versus the "French-Roman concept" of the afterlife and Office of the Dead, does not necessarily reveal any convergence of Lutheran and Roman Catholic doctrines on what the living can do for the dead. Further, it has been recognized that the Lutheran objection to *ex opere operato* of the mass is based upon the conviction that forgiveness is received in the mass through faith and not by works. The doctrine of the mass for the dead as taught by the recent and authoritative *Catechism of the Catholic Church* continues to obscure the role of faith in receiving forgiveness in the mass when it says the eucharist is "offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead." If the Lord's Supper is forgiveness, forgiveness is justification, and this justification comes through faith, not works, then the mass for the dead is disqualified because it yet remains to be shown that the deceased person still receives the benefits of the mass by faith. Thus, the article of justification is contradicted in the mass for the dead. The doctrine and practice of the mass for the dead stands opposed to the definition of justification in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. It is hoped that Roman Catholic theologians will respond to the Lutheran charge yet standing, that the theology of the mass offered for the dead "runs into direct and violent conflict" with the fundamental article of justification. LOGIA

NOTES

1. *Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification* [document online] (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, accessed 21 April 2002); <http://www.elca.org/ea/Ecumenical/romancatholic/jddj/declaration.html>
2. *JDDJ*, par. 43.
3. All quotes of the Lutheran Confessions are from the Tappert edition of *The Book of Concord*.
4. *JDDJ*, par 1.
5. *JDDJ*, par 11.
6. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation and the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs, *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue III: The Eucharist as Sacrifice* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference and New York: Lutheran World Federation, 1967).
7. *Dialogue III*, 188–191.
8. *Ibid.*, 45–79.
9. *Ibid.*, 57.
10. *Ibid.*, 67.
11. *Ibid.*, 69.
12. Knud Ottosen, *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead* (Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1993), 47.
13. *Ibid.*, 374.
14. *Ibid.*, 375.
15. *Ibid.*, 378.
16. *Ibid.*, 380.
17. *Ibid.*, 380.
18. *Ibid.*, 93. Note: Ottosen seems to contradict himself concerning the location of the German concept of the Office of the Dead. On page 93 he identifies Cambresis and Flanders as locations for the German concept, while on page 380 he identifies the region of the French-Roman concept as belonging "to England, to France (i.e., Cambresis and Flanders)." It may be that instead of "i.e.," "excluding" was intended. In any case, Cambresis and

Flanders are the only areas named for both the German and French-Roman concepts, and this apparent contradiction does not affect the use of his study for this paper.

19. Carl F. Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion: Luther's Controversy with Rome on the Eucharistic Sacrifice* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 47.
20. *Ibid.*, 47–48.
21. *Ibid.*, 50–51.
22. *Ibid.*, 51.
23. J. M. Reu, *The Augsburg Confession: A Collection of Sources* (reprint St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1983), 369.
24. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [book on-line] (Cit . . . del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994 with 1997 corrections, accessed 21 April 2002) <http://www.scborromeo.org/index2.htm>. The Internet site states "This on-line Second Edition English Translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church includes the corrections promulgated by Pope John Paul II on 8 September 1997. These corrections to the English text of the Catechism of the Catholic Church were made to harmonize it with the official Latin text promulgated by Pope John Paul II on the same date." "Copyright permission for posting of the English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the Saint Charles Borromeo Catholic Church web site was granted by Amministrazione Del Patrimonio Della Sede Apostolica, case number 130389."
25. These thirteen occurrences are at paragraphs 614, 616, 1414, 1491, 2409, 2412, 2454, 2487, and 2509.
26. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* may be found online at <http://www.scborromeo.org/index2.htm>.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. *JDDJ*, par. 11.

Early and Late Luther

A Calvinist Perspective on Luther's Evolution

SHANE ROSENTHAL



IT HAS LONG BEEN MAINTAINED THAT Luther was an advocate of the concept of “universal grace.” For example, after compiling numerous citations from Luther’s works under the heading of “Grace” for his book, *What Luther Says*, Ewald Plass wrote that “Luther first taught universal grace in 1515; in the early 1520s we hear little of a particular grace, but soon he knows only of the universal favor of God. This was and remained his characteristic opinion.”¹ What he did not state clearly here, Plass clarified elsewhere, “While lecturing on Romans in 1515–16, he was still teaching particular grace and predestinated reprobation, and his earlier lectures on the Psalms (1513–15), reveal the same point of view.”² This is basically what many of my Lutheran friends used to tell me whenever I confronted them with certain Luther quotes that seemed to advocate Calvinism. “But that’s early Luther!” they would generally reply. Under this theory, it is assumed that Luther, though he did start out as an advocate of particular grace, slowly began to teach universal grace, and this latter view, rather than the former, is what characterizes the Reformer’s overall theological approach. In short, there is a distinction to be made between the theologies of early and late Luther, especially with regard to the nature and extent of grace.

After many years of reading Luther, and seeing this distinction firsthand, I came to appreciate the advice of my Lutheran friends and relatives. For example, early in his career (1515–1516) while lecturing through Romans, Luther commented in passing on Paul’s words to Timothy that “God will have all men to be saved” (1 Tim 2:4), saying this text and others like it could easily be explained “because all these sayings must be understood only with respect to the elect, as the apostle says in 2 Tim 2:10: ‘All for the elect.’”³ Luther went on to say in this same passage that “Christ did not die for absolutely all, for he says: ‘This is my blood which is shed for you’ (Lk 22:20) and ‘for many’ (Mk 14:24)—he did not say: for all—‘to the remission of sins’ (Mt 26:28).”⁴ It appears in this text that Luther was not only arguing in favor of particular, rather than universal grace, but seems to have been promoting the doctrine of limited atonement as well.⁵ But notice how different this citation from Luther’s early career is from the following passage written in 1544, just a year before the Reformer’s death. Here Luther interprets “He shall justify many” from Isaiah 53:

Isaiah here uses the word “many” for the word “all,” after the manner of Paul in Romans 5:15. . . . There is no difference between “many” and “all.” The righteousness of Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, our Lord and Savior, is so great that it could justify innumerable worlds. “He shall justify many,” says he, that is to say, all, because He offers His righteousness to all, and all who believe in Christ obtain it.⁶

What is striking about this later approach is how far removed it is from his approach in 1515. At that time Luther gave a universal passage a “particular” interpretation (the word “all” referred to a limited group; the elect), whereas in the 1544 text he gave a universal interpretation to a word that he had previously used in a limited way (the word “many” no longer refers to the elect, but now to the whole world; all).⁷ In short, Luther appears to have undergone a recognizable shift in his thinking, from that of particular to universal grace.

But what if another theory could better explain the differences between early and late Luther? For example, what if Luther’s change could better be explained as a change of emphasis and rhetoric, rather than a substantive theological move? What if it could be demonstrated that Luther actually never abandoned his earlier particular grace theology, but later emphasized the *deus revelatus* to such an extent that his focus almost exclusively fell upon the universal promises of the gospel? Thus, the basic question of this article is whether or not the later Luther actually moved away from his particular grace theology to that of *universal grace*, or merely began to emphasize the *universal offer* of grace, while continuing to be an advocate of particular grace. After reading my way through volumes of Luther’s writings, I have come to the conclusion that this latter approach is actually the best way to make sense of Luther. Thus, in this article I will attempt to prove this thesis by interacting with many citations from Luther’s corpus over his long career. As part of this effort, I will attempt to demonstrate the following points: First, Luther never actually abandoned his earlier particular grace views. Second, Luther’s evolution on grace is not to be viewed as a major theological shift, but as a change in emphasis due to the fact that over time Luther increasingly emphasized the *universal offer* of grace as an offshoot of the *deus revelatus-deus absconditus* distinction, which was completely in place in Luther’s theology by 1518. Third, *The Bondage of The Will*, which contains significantly strong statements about particular grace (and reprobation), is consistent both with Luther’s early and later theology, as its chief theological construct is the *deus revelatus-deus absconditus* distinction.

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At the outset, I would first like to say that this is a work of historical theology, which has the unfortunate habit of sometimes conforming to the wishes of the person doing the historical research. Therefore I will admit up front that I am a Calvinist, and that I am under the impression that Luther was closer to Geneva than many contemporary Lutherans care to admit. Perhaps this bias has affected my research, but none of us in this life can really escape the problem of personal bias, so all I ask is that readers be critical of the research where it is flawed, rather than dismissing the idea outright. Above all, I am interested in generating healthy debate on the subject, especially between Lutherans and Reformed Christians who have for too long neglected Paul's command to work out our differences and to be "united together in mind and thought" (1 Cor 1:10).

THE DIFFICULTY

One of the important distinctions between universal and particular grace is the testy subject of predestination. Lutherans wanting to emphasize universal grace claim that predestination is single (God elects to salvation but not to damnation). Calvinists, on the other hand, affirm double predestination because of their emphasis on particular grace. As Ewald Plass mentioned earlier, Luther did at one time teach particular grace and even reprobation; nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that some Lutherans fail to acknowledge this fact and assume that Luther never taught anything other than universal grace. For example, Burnell Eckardt Jr. claimed in the pages of *LOGIA* that

It is difficult to find in Luther a direct discussion as to why some are saved and not others, the *cur alii non* question On the one hand he stood firmly on the side of *sola gratia* with regard to the elect, but on the other hand, he refused to suggest in any way that God might be responsible for the ultimate damnation of the rest.⁸

But clearly these remarks do not do justice to Luther's own position as developed, for instance, in *The Bondage of The Will* (hereafter referred to as *BW*):

The will of the divine majesty purposely abandons and reprobates some to perish. And it is not for us to ask why he does so, but to stand in awe of God who both can do and wills to do such things.⁹

Are we to suppose then that purposeful abandonment and reprobation does not necessarily imply that God is in any way responsible for the damnation of sinners? Luther does not stop there: "everything takes place by necessity in us, according as he either loves or does not love us from all eternity. . . ." ¹⁰ Again, "It is not in our power to change, much less to resist, his will, which wants us hardened and by which we are forced to be hardened, whether we like it or not."¹¹ In face of such evidence, even the likes of Gordon Rupp felt obliged to confess that, "We have then to recognize . . . that Luther teaches a double predestination."¹² It simply cannot be denied that Luther was still advocating particular grace and predestinated reprobation when he wrote *BW*. But perhaps this was still early Luther. Early Luther, as we saw earlier, even

advocated limited atonement. Perhaps he made his shift after writing *BW*. There is some merit to this consideration, for the Reformer around this time still appears to be advocating particular redemption. Luther wrote in a sermon on Heb 9:1–11 that was first published in 1525:

Christ is our Mediator through his blood; by it our conscience is freed from sin in the sight of God, inasmuch as God promises the Spirit through the blood of Christ. All, however, do not receive him. Only those called to be heirs eternal, the elect, receive the Spirit. We find, then, in this excellent lesson, the comforting doctrine taught that Christ is he whom we should know as the Priest and Bishop of our souls; that no sin is forgiven, nor the Holy Spirit given, by reason of works or merit on our part, but alone through the blood of Christ, and that to those for whom God has ordained it.¹³

In this sermon (probably delivered when Luther was 40–42 years of age), the stress is laid on the merits of the atonement, not as to its sufficiency or intrinsic value, but as to its efficacious virtue "to those for whom God has ordained it." Again, this is basically an argument for limited atonement. And is it the whole world that is called to receive eternal life? No, the only ones "called to be heirs eternal" are the elect. Clearly, these lines stand in tension with the Lutheran conception of universal grace. And for this reason, some Lutherans have been adamant in their denial of this aspect of Luther's teaching, as we see for example in the comments of Don Matzat:

While accepting divine election, Luther refused the logical conclusions that led to an atonement limited to the elect and irresistible grace. He retained universal grace and man's power to resist and reject the Gospel.¹⁴

The best response to this sort of claim is to listen again to Luther's clarity: "Christ did not die for absolutely all. . . ." ¹⁵ It is also worth mentioning that Luther did not come this position (either in 1515 or 1525) as he plumbed the depths of logic, but in his exegesis of Scripture.

So if we are to maintain the idea that Luther made a shift to universal grace, we must locate the shift somewhere after Luther's early forties. But one of the difficulties with this approach is the fact that Luther never repudiated his earlier opinions. In fact, what one finds is just the opposite.¹⁶ On the other side, however, it is also difficult to maintain that Luther remained an advocate of particular grace until the end of his career. In 1534, he wrote in a sermon based on the text of John 3:16:

We are not to say "Who knows whether I am counted among those to whom this Son, and through him, eternal life is given?" . . . Rather say: "Whatever I may be . . . I too, belong to the world." . . . What he says, he says to all in general; this Son and eternal life are promised and given to the wide world, in order not to exclude a single soul.¹⁷

Isn't this sentiment at odds with the doctrine of reprobation as articulated in *BW*, or the passages just cited arguing for limited atonement? Ewald Plass explained the difficulty for us this way:

Luther saw with constantly increasing clarity the impasse at which one arrives by retaining at once the universal grace of God, the election of individuals, and the utter inability of man to contribute anything whatever to his conversion. But, as also T. Harnack points out, he never tried to harmonize these teachings. Luther was convinced that Scripture taught all of them and was willing to bear, for the time being, the theological tension they created rather than make concessions that would violate any one of them.¹⁸

Plass was convinced that Luther did teach universal grace, and because of this, he observed a theological tension in Luther's theology. But perhaps there is another solution to the problem. Perhaps Luther did not advocate universal grace, understood in the contemporary sense, but merely emphasized the universal character of the gospel offer. If so, this greatly minimizes the tension in Luther's theology, and fits well with his overriding theological principle, namely, the distinction between the *deus absconditus* and the *deus revelatus*. This is the heart of it: from the vantage point of things earthly or things revealed, the gospel is for everyone and no one is to be excluded, but from the vantage point of things heavenly and God's secret decree, there is exclusion because of God's particular choices. Thus, the crucial hermeneutical question when reading Luther is this: From which vantage point is he writing?

THE HIDDEN AND REVEALED GOD

This distinction between the *deus absconditus-deus revelatus*, or the hidden and revealed God, is the key to understanding Martin Luther and his evolution on the matter of grace. To gain insight as to how Luther used this distinction, one should notice how Luther warns about the dangers of speculating over predestination. In a letter to a companion in the year 1545, Luther writes, for example,

My dear lord and friend has told me that you are at times tempted with thoughts about the eternal predestination of God . . . Just as murdering, stealing, and cursing are sins, so it is also a sin to concern oneself with this search; and to do so is the work of the devil, as are all other sins.¹⁹

Sometimes quotes such as this are used to highlight the difference between early and late Luther; if the later Luther is anti-predestination, the argument goes, it must have been the early Luther who wrote *BW*, etc. But Luther is not anti-predestination even in his later years. The very next line in the same letter quoted above reads as follows:

On the other hand, God has given us His Son, Jesus Christ; daily we should think of Him and mirror ourselves in Him. There we shall discover the predestination of God and shall find it most beautiful.²⁰

Luther was warning his readers about the dangers of *speculating* about predestination, not about predestination itself, which for him was a beautiful thing, as long as it was mirrored in Christ.²¹

What is interesting is that one can find warnings about speculating over predestination throughout Luther's career, even before

the writing of *BW*. Notice for example what Luther's concerns are in 1519 in this sermon on "Preparing to Die":

You must not regard hell and eternal pain in relation to predestination, not in yourself, or in itself, or in those who are damned, nor must you be worried by the many people in the world who are not chosen. If you are not careful, that picture will quickly upset you and be your downfall. You must force yourself to keep your eyes closed tightly to such a view, for it can never help you. . . . After all, you will have to let God be God and grant that he knows more about you than you do yourself. So then, gaze at the heavenly picture of Christ, who descended into hell for your sake and was forsaken by God. . . . In that picture your hell is defeated and your uncertain election is made sure. If you concern yourself solely with that and believe that it was done for you, you will surely be preserved in this same faith. Never, therefore, let this be erased from your vision. Seek yourself only in Christ and not in yourself and you will find yourself in him eternally.²²

Written some six years before *BW* was published, Luther here warns of the personal danger of considering predestination apart from Christ, just as he did in his letter of 1545. He has similar concerns in his Genesis commentary, where he wrote that it is the "the sophists [who] dispute about election."²³ But again, it is not election itself that he is concerned with, but rather, the abuse of speculating about it, for as he continues,

I have often warned men to abstain from speculations about the majesty of God in the abstract (*nuda maiestas*); for besides being untrue, these thoughts are very far removed from being wholesome. Let us rather think of God as He reveals Himself to us in His Word and in the Sacraments.²⁴

Therefore, one cannot use Luther's remarks about the warnings of discussing predestination as an indication of his later evolution, for as we have shown, he had these concerns throughout his career, and even before the writing of *BW*.

We can see from the above comments that Luther's main theological construct at work was the distinction between the hidden and revealed God. Based on the text of Deuteronomy 29:29, Luther continually reminded his readers, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children." The Christian should have nothing to do with the God in his nude majesty, but only with God insofar as he has clothed and revealed himself. Speculating about one's predestination was dangerous for Luther because it was tantamount to probing into God's secret chambers, whereas focusing on Christ and finding one's election in him was resting in the revealed things of God.

Understanding Luther's commitment to the "things hidden-things revealed" distinction is essential for understanding how this Reformer could teach both particular grace and the universal offer. Why? Because Luther saw predestination as part of God's hidden will, and the preaching of the Gospel as part of his revealed will. Also, as Gordon Rupp pointed out, the doctrine of double predestination was for Luther "the cause of the most terrible 'Anfechtungen. . .'"²⁵ Luther was convinced that the Bible

clearly taught a doctrine of election and reprobation (of which *BW* was a clear investigation and exposition of those doctrines and the biblical texts in support of them), but at the same time, he was concerned that many abused those doctrines by ignoring the simple promises of the gospel and instead began speculating with the powers of reason alone into the divine majesty. Look, for example, at Luther's comments in his Preface to Romans written as early as 1522:

In chapters 9, 10 and 11, St. Paul teaches us about the eternal predestination of God. It is the original source which determines who would believe and who wouldn't, who can be set free from sin and who cannot. Such matters have been taken out of our hands and are put into God's hands. . . . But here we must shut the mouths of those sacrilegious and arrogant spirits who, mere beginners that they are, bring their reason to bear on this matter and commence, from their exalted position, to probe the abyss of divine predestination and uselessly trouble themselves about whether they are predestined or not. . . . You, however, follow the reasoning of this letter in the order in which it is presented. Fix your attention first of all on Christ and the Gospel, so that you may recognize your sin and his grace. Then struggle against sin, as chapters 1–8 have taught you to. Finally, when you have come, in chapter 8, under the shadow of the cross and suffering, they will teach you, in chapters 9–11, about predestination and what a comfort it is. Apart from suffering, the cross and the pangs of death, you cannot come to grips with election without harm to yourself and secret anger against God. The old Adam must be quite dead before you can endure this matter and drink this strong wine. Therefore make sure you don't drink wine while you are still a babe at the breast.²⁶

Here, only three years before the publication of *BW*, Luther clearly affirms election-reprobation, and at the same time, warns against abusing it. Although it is "the original source which determines who would believe and who wouldn't, one should leave such things to God (*deus absconditus*) because "such matters have been taken out of our hands." Nevertheless, we are not left in the dark because we are told to focus on Christ and his gospel (*deus revelatus*). Given this methodological approach, one can see how Luther begins to focus most of his attention on the universal passages from divine revelation. His desire is to secure salvation for anyone and everyone in the world, so his focus begins to shift to the universal offer. Look for example at Luther's universal emphasis in the following paragraph from another sermon on Jn 3:16:

You say: Yes, I would gladly believe it if I were like St. Peter and St. Paul and others who are pious and holy; but I am too great a sinner, and who knows whether I am predestinated? Answer: Look at these words! What do they say, and of whom do they speak? "For God so loved the world"; and "that whosoever believeth on him." Now, the world is not simply St. Peter and St. Paul, but the entire human race taken collectively, and here no one is excluded: God's Son was given for all, all are asked to believe, and all who believe shall not be lost, etc. Take hold of your nose, search in your bosom, whether you are not also a

man (that is, a piece of the world) and belong to the number which the word "whosoever" embraces, as well as others?²⁷

This was preached in 1522, the same year he wrote that predestination was the source which "determines who would believe and who wouldn't."²⁸ Yet in this pastoral sermon, his emphasis is on the *deus revelatus* and the universal elements of the text in question. If you merely take hold of your nose, you become certain that you qualify as member of the world and hence, a person who can avail him or herself of God's universally offered grace.

It should also be pointed out that if this Jn 3:16 sermon of 1522 does prove that Luther has shifted to universal grace, then one would have to argue that the Reformer converted back to a particular grace view in 1525 with his argument for limited atonement in the Hebrews 9 sermon, and the writing of *BW*. I do not happen to think that theological flip-flops back and forth are the best way to explain the evolution of Luther. Rather, I think the Reformer's own comments from *BW* are insightful. Commenting on Ezekiel 18:21 ("I desire not the death of the sinner"), Luther writes

For he is here speaking of the preached and offered mercy of God, not of that hidden and awful will of God whereby he ordains by his own counsel which and what sort of persons he wills to be recipients and partakers of his preached and offered mercy. This will is not to be inquired into, but reverently adored. . . .²⁹

Here Luther makes his classic hidden-revealed God distinction which allows him to simultaneously affirm on the one hand that God does not want to condemn sinners (according to his revealed promises), and yet according to his hidden decree he wills to make only some partakers of the "offered mercy." Luther elaborates on this point:

God does many things that he does not disclose to us in his word; he also wills many things which he does not disclose himself as willing in his word. Thus he does not will the death of a sinner, according to his word; but he wills it according to that inscrutable will of his. It is our business, however, to pay attention to the word and leave that inscrutable will alone. . . . It is therefore right to say, "If God does not desire our death, the fact that we perish must be imputed to our own will." It is right, I mean, if you speak of God as preached; for he wills all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4), seeing he comes with the word of salvation to all, and the fault is in the will that does not admit him, as he says in Matthew 23: "How often would I have gathered your children, and you would not!" But why that majesty of his does not remove or change this defect of our will in all men, since it is not in man's power to do so, or why he imputes this defect to man, when man cannot help having it, we have no right to inquire.³⁰

Though we have no right to inquire into the secret predestination, we must not ignore or deny it; it is a clear teaching of Scripture. But notice Luther's rhetoric with regard to the *deus revelatus*. God wills all men to be saved, insofar as he "comes with the word of sal-

vation to all.” Luther’s interpretation of this universal passage is best understood as a sincere and universal *offer* of grace. Thus the tension between Luther’s universalism and particularism should be located here in the distinction between the *deus revelatus* and the *deus absconditus*.

I certainly am willing to acknowledge that Luther exhibits a change over time. But his change is not to be conceived of as a shift from particular to universal grace. Rather, once he adopts the hidden-revealed God distinction (which can be first seen in his Heidelberg Disputation of 1518),³¹ he slowly and increasingly emphasizes the universal offer to such an extent that later in his career, one sees very little emphasis or discussion on matters pertaining to the secret things of God whatsoever. And the biggest reason for this is due to what Gordon Rupp referred to as Luther’s “Anfechtungen.” Luther’s own angst over predestination was met with good counsel from Staupitz, as he recalls during one of his table conversations of 1532:

Staupitz said: If you want to dispute about predestination, begin with the wounds of Christ, and it will cease. But if you continue to debate about it, you will lose Christ, the Word, the sacraments, and everything.³²

This counsel was given to Luther early in his career, as can be demonstrated by the fact that the sentiment is basically repeated verbatim in his Romans commentary of 1515–1516.³³ One can readily see the hidden-revealed God distinction in Staupitz’s counsel to Luther, and this wisdom greatly comforted the Reformer’s troubled conscience. Thus, you find him over his career greatly emphasizing not only this distinction, but also the *deus revelatus* side of it. For example, notice what Luther says in his Galatians commentary of 1535: “Our first consideration must be the comfort of troubled consciences, that they may not perish with the multitudes.”³⁴ Luther’s desire is to do for others what Staupitz did for him. Thus we see in the Galatians commentary Luther’s strong emphasis on the universal character of the gospel offer:

The world was promised to Abraham because he believed. The whole world is blessed if it believes as Abraham believed. The blessing is the promise of the Gospel. That all nations are to be blessed means that all nations are to hear the Gospel. All nations are to be declared righteous before God through faith in Christ Jesus. To bless simply means to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ’s salvation. This is the office of the New Testament Church which distributes the promised blessing by preaching the Gospel, by administering the sacraments, by comforting the broken-hearted, in short, by dispensing the benefits of Christ.³⁵

The preaching of the gospel is what gives comfort, and this is given universally to all. Thus the world is blessed by the promise of the gospel, in the hearing of the gospel, and the spreading abroad of the message of Christ. This is clear evidence that Luther was advocating a universal offer, rather than a full-blown theology of universal grace. Luther had argued similarly on Christmas Day of 1522 while preaching on Ti 2:11, saying, “‘The grace of God hath appeared,’ the apostle says, meaning God’s grace is clearly

manifest. How was it manifested? By the preaching of the apostles it was proclaimed world wide.”³⁶ And rather than finding the words “universal grace” in this sermon, one finds a clear reference to the “universal proclamation of the gospel.”³⁷

The clearest example of this, however, has yet to be explored. In 1539, while commenting on Genesis, Luther again took up the discussion of the universal blessing of Abraham:

Moreover, note should be taken of the explanation of the universal principle, “All nations shall be blessed,” which, of course, in Holy Scripture is a common way of saying that not a single one of the nations is blessed except through this Seed. The same thought occurs in John 1:9: “It enlightens every man,” and also in 1 Timothy 2:4 “God desires all men to be saved”—not that all are enlightened, but that the universal blessing, scattered abroad among all nations, comes from this Seed. An exclusive rather than a universal principle is meant, as though one said: “Nowhere is there light, life, and salvation except in this Seed.”³⁸

Now, remember, this was written very late in Luther’s career, when Luther was around fifty-six years of age. If this is not late Luther, I do not know what is. And yet, in this passage we find the Reformer emphasizing the universal offer of grace that is “scattered abroad among all nations.” And Luther concludes by arguing, “An exclusive rather than a universal principle is meant.” The importance of this passage cannot be under-emphasized. Luther is explaining what he calls the “universal principle” found in three significant universal texts: the “all nations” of Genesis 22:18, the “every man” of John 1:9, and the “all men” of 1 Timothy 2:4. And rather than coming to the conclusion of universal grace, Luther argues for what he calls “an exclusive *rather than* a universal principle” (emphasis mine). There is no stronger piece of evidence for the fact that Luther remained an advocate of particular grace throughout the remainder of his career. And the way he argues for this exclusive grace is by way of the universal offer.

DID LUTHER REMAIN A PARTICULARIST WITH REGARD TO THE ATONEMENT?

We established earlier that Luther did teach a particular redemption in 1515 while teaching Romans, and later around 1525 while working through the book of Hebrews. The question that I would now like to take up is whether Luther remained an advocate of this view from 1525 on.

According to my own research, there are no clear arguments for limited atonement in Luther’s writings after 1525. If you agree with my thesis that Luther did remain an advocate of particular (or in his words “exclusive”) grace even quite late in his career, perhaps the absence of any reference to limited atonement after 1525 could be viewed as evidence of his rhetorical rather than theological shift. In other words, from this time forward, he almost exclusively proceeded to discuss theology from the vantage point of things revealed. That Luther was thinking along these lines is evident from his 1544 discussion of Isaiah 53, quoted earlier:

The righteousness of Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, our Lord and Savior, is so great that it could justify innum-

erable worlds. “He shall justify many,” says he, that is to say, all, because He offers His righteousness to all, and all who believe in Christ obtain it.

According to Luther, Christ’s righteousness is so powerful that “it could justify innumerable worlds.” In other words, it is sufficient for all, and even more besides. Yet, attention should be directed to those words, “it could.” This has to do with the power of the cross, not its application. Thus, even though Luther suggests that the word “many” really means “all,” his interpretation of justification for all is that “he offers his righteousness to all.” Justification can be universally proclaimed because of the sufficiency of the atonement, but those for whom this justification actually applies, Luther makes clear, are those “who believe in Christ.” Perhaps a modern Lutheran might respond here by making the distinction between objective and subjective justification. The problem with this possibility is that Luther in this passage seems only to admit of the universal “possibility” of justification: “it could justify innumerable worlds,” not “it did justify. . . .” This is basically the medieval “sufficient for all-efficient for the elect” construction,⁴⁰ rather than a formulation of objective justification.

It must be admitted that there are a number of passages in Luther’s writings with such a strong emphasis on the universal promise that the Reformer appears to be advocating a universal atonement. In his Galatians commentary, Luther writes,

Isaiah declares of Christ: “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. We have no right to minimize the force of this declaration. God does not amuse Himself with words. What a relief for a Christian to know that Christ is covered all over with my sins, your sins, and the sins of the whole world.”⁴¹

This might come as a surprise to Lutherans, but many Calvinists would completely concur with the above statement, because Luther is writing from the vantage point of God’s revealed promises and not his secret election. Reformed theologian Charles Hodge, for example, noted that

All that Christ did and suffered would have been necessary had only one human soul been the object of redemption; and nothing different and nothing more would have been required had every child of Adam been saved through his blood.⁴²

Hodge went on to argue, based on the classical “sufficiency-efficiency” distinction, that “There is a sense, therefore, in which He died for all, and there is a sense in which He died for the elect alone.”⁴³ Christ took upon himself the sins of the whole world. But the sense in which he did this is to be understood as the sufficiency of the atonement (as Luther clearly argued in 1537⁴⁴ and 1544⁴⁵), and does not take into account the fact that it was efficient for the elect alone (as Luther argued in 1515–1516,⁴⁶ 1517–1518,⁴⁷ and 1525⁴⁸). The reason Luther does not write or preach on the “efficient for the elect” part of the equation after 1525 is, that he had begun to strongly emphasize the *deus revelatus* to the exclusion of the *deus absconditus* from this time on. A typical sermon or presentation, after 1525, especially on the universal promises has the same flavor:

No one is excepted here. Therefore do not follow your own ideas, but cling to the Word that promises you forgiveness of sins through the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world. . . . Do you hear? There is no insufficiency in the Lamb. It bears all sins from the very beginning of the world. Therefore it must bear yours too, and offer you grace.⁴⁹

Christ’s death is presented as being sufficient to bear all sins, and grace is universally offered. And notice how he describes the universal offer:

“And by His knowledge He shall justify many” (Is 53). Here there is no other work of ours but that we do not reject the offered mercy but accept it by faith. And even this is a gift of the Holy Spirit, because “not all have faith” (2 Th 3:2).⁵⁰

This selection, which was written in 1532, has the strong emphasis on the universal offer, but with it, a discussion of the necessity of faith in order for the offer to be applied. And this faith, which is given by grace via the Holy Spirit, is admittedly not given to all. Again, this is basically the medieval “sufficient for all, efficient for the elect” construction.

CONCLUSION

I have been arguing that Luther, throughout his career, advocated a theology of particular grace, with an ever-increasing emphasis on the universal offer of grace, and that the main theological construct supporting this argument is Luther’s hidden-revealed God distinction. What is fascinating about this is how similar it is to the formulations of classical Calvinist theology. Notice for example how Calvin formulates his ideas on the subject:

But it may be asked, if God wishes none to perish, why is it that so many do perish? To this my answer is, that no mention is here made of the hidden purpose of God, according to which the reprobate are doomed to their own ruin, but only of his will as made known to us in the gospel. For God there stretches forth his hand without a difference to all, but lays hold only of those, to lead them to himself, whom he has chosen before the foundation of the world.⁵¹

Calvin follows Luther in making the hidden-revealed God distinction, and even asserts that in things revealed, God “stretches forth his hand without a difference to all.” Charles Hodge elaborates on this point even further saying, “The righteousness of Christ being of infinite value or merit, and being in its nature precisely what all men need, may be offered to all men. It is thus offered to the elect and to the non-elect.”⁵² Hodge went on to conclude that “If any of the elect (being adults) fail thus to accept of it, they perish. If any of the non-elect should believe, they would be saved.”⁵³ Here we see that from the perspective of things earthly, acceptance or rejection of the gospel offer (which is infinite in value) is the only thing that matters. Thus in my opinion there are striking similarities between the theology of Luther and that of classical Calvinism on the nature and extent of grace.⁵⁴ Perhaps awareness of these similarities could renew discussions on this most important of topics between our respective townships of Geneva and Wittenberg. LOGIA

NOTES

1. Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 615, note 14.
2. *Ibid.*, 455, note 2.
3. Wilhelm Pauck, ed., *Luther: Lectures on Romans*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 252.
4. *Ibid.*
5. This is not novel with Luther. Many Augustinians came to the position of limited atonement before the time of the Reformation, including Anselm, Aquinas, and Lombard. In fact one of the common slogans of the medieval church was that the atonement was “sufficient for all but efficient for the elect” (See Aquinas: *Summa*, Third Part, QQ 48–49; Lombard: *Sentences*, Book 3, Question 20). This formulation of limited atonement is even found Luther’s mentor, Johan Von Staupitz: “Nor should it escape you that the suffering of the Son of God is sufficient for all, though it was not for all but for many that His blood was poured out” [Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 192].
6. Ewald Plass, ed., *What Luther Says* (from a sermon on Isaiah 53 delivered in 1544, and first published in 1550), 608, citation 1857.
7. Compare again with Staupitz, “the suffering of the Son of God is sufficient for all, though it was not for all but for many that His blood was poured out. . . .” Notice that Staupitz, like early Luther, had different meanings for “many” and “all.” Perhaps Luther received his particularism directly from his mentor.
8. Burnell F. Eckardt Jr., “Bondage of the Will: Calvin and Luther,” *LOGIA* 7, no. 4 (1998): 23–27.
9. Gordon Rupp, ed., *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 206–207. Following Erasmus’ initial letter to Luther, the second part of this volume contains the full text of Luther’s *Bondage of The Will*.
10. *Ibid.*, 252.
11. *Ibid.*, 242.
12. Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1953), 282.
13. John Nicholas Lenker, ed., *Sermons of Martin Luther: The Church Postils*, Vol. 7, trans. J. N. Lenker et al. (reprint Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1983), 167–168. No date is fixed on this particular sermon, but according to the editor’s introductory essay (vol. 1, p. 4), the sermons from Epiphany to Easter (to which the Heb 9 sermon belongs) were first published in 1525.
14. Don Matzat, “Martin Luther and the Doctrine of Predestination,” *Issues Etc. Journal* 1, no. 8 (July–Aug 1997), 10.
15. See note 3 above.
16. “To Wolfgang Capito, July 9, 1537,” AE 50: 172–173. Luther wrote that he would rather see all of his books destroyed, rather than to be collected and reprinted, for, “I acknowledge none of them to be really a book of mine, except perhaps the one On the Bound Will and the Catechism.”
17. Eugene F. A. Klug, ed., *Sermons of Martin Luther: The House Postils*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 204.
18. Plass, ed., *What Luther Says*, 455, note 1.
19. *Ibid.*, Luther’s Letter of Aug 8, 1545, 454.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Calvin was in full agreement with Luther on this point: “But if we are elected in him, we cannot find the certainty of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we look at him apart from the Son. Christ, then, is the mirror in which we ought, and in which, without deception, we may contemplate our election” (*Institutes* 3.24.5).
22. “A Sermon on Preparing to Die,” 1519, cited from Timothy Lull, ed., *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 644–645.
23. AE 2: 72 (commentary on Gn 6:18).
24. *Ibid.*
25. Rupp, *The Righteousness of God*, 282.
26. Martin Luther, *Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans*, trans. Bro. Andrew Thornton, 1983 (Internet: www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/test/wittenberg/german.bible/rom-eng.txt).
27. “Second Sermon on Jn 3:16,” 1522, Lenker, ed., *Church Postils* 3: 363–364.
28. See note 26 above. In 1522, Luther also wrote in a Letter to Hans Von Rechenberg that 1 Tim 2:4 was related to the fact that “God wants us to make supplication for all estates, to teach and preach the truth to all people. . . .” In other words, he interpreted “God wants all to men be saved” in terms of the universal offer. Then Luther went on to show that he was still an advocate of particular grace, “However, it does not follow that God will save all men. . . . Otherwise, God’s providence and election from eternity, which St. Paul so emphasizes, would be null and void” (AE 43: 54).
29. Rupp, *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, 200.
30. *Ibid.*, 201–202.
31. Lull, ed., *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, “Heidelberg Disputation,” theses 19–22, page 31.
32. Plass, ed., *What Luther Says*, 456, entry 1348.
33. Pauck, ed., *Luther: Lectures on Romans*: “No one . . . should plunge into these speculations, lest he fall into an abyss of horror and despair. He must first purge the eyes of his heart in meditating on the wounds of Christ” (271).
34. Theodore Graebner, ed., *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, 1535 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1949); see commentary of Gal 3:19.
35. *Ibid.*, Gal 3:9.
36. Lenker, *Church Postils* 6: 114 (a sermon on Tit 2:11–15). The date is not cited in the English edition of the Church Postils, but Ewald Plass in numerous places argues that the sermon was preached on Christmas day, 1522 (see *What Luther Says*, 669, 882, 1027).
37. *Ibid.*
38. AE 4: 177. Luther was commenting on Gn 22:17–18.
39. See note 6 above.
40. See note 5 above.
41. Graebner, ed., *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (see commentary on Gal 3:13).
42. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952; orig 1871), 2: 545.
43. *Ibid.*, 546.
44. See note 50 below.
45. See note 6 above.
46. See note 3 above.
47. James Atkinson, ed., *Luther: Early Theological Works*, “Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 1517–18” (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962). Luther again argued that Christ “did not say that his blood was shed for all but for many” and then immediately adds, “But this touches upon the subject of predestination, a subject at once too difficult and too unyielding for our feeble intellect to grasp” (178).
48. See note 13 above.
49. Plass, ed., *What Luther Says*, 608, entry 1858 (from a sermon on Jn 1:29 delivered on Nov. 3, 1537, as evident from the header to entry 1854 on page 607).
50. AE 12: 386. Written in 1532, these lines were found in the commentary of Ps 51:13).
51. John Calvin, *Commentary on 2 Pt 3:9*.
52. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2: 555.
53. *Ibid.*, 555–556.
54. See also for example Calvin’s commentary on John 3:16; Calvin’s *Institutes*, 3.3.21, 3.22.10, and 3.23.5; Zacharius Ursinus’ *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* (Philipsburg: P&R), 106–107; The Synod of Dordt, Second Head, Articles 3, 5, 6, and 8, Third-Fourth Heads, Articles 8 and 9, and the Conclusion.

REVIEWS

“It is not many books that make men learned . . . but it is a good book frequently read.”

Martin Luther



Review Essay

Confession and Mission, Word and Sacrament: The Ecclesial Theology of Wilhelm Löhe. By David C. Ratke. St. Louis: CPH, 2001. 234 pages.

On a list of formative figures in American Lutheranism, Wilhelm Löhe (1808–1872) ranks at the top. He symbolizes the unwavering material, personal and theological support German Lutherans gave to their brothers and sisters across the oceanic divide. Why then, one may ask, has Löhe’s theological legacy among American Lutherans not received the attention it really deserves? Is it perhaps due, in part, to an inherent suspicion of him for some of his questionable theological tenets—doctrines that had brought to an end a fruitful, yet brief, working relationship between Missouri and the synods of Ohio, Missouri, Buffalo and Iowa? If that were so, then the task to make Wilhelm Löhe palatable for the English-speaking Lutheran audience would be a daunting and challenging one indeed.

But the author of the book under review has made significant inroads towards doing just that. In the past, English works on Löhe have predominantly been historical treatments. We now have a systematic piece at hand that investigates the important theological traits Löhe stands for: his ecclesiology as it relates to confessions and missions, ministry, worship and liturgy, and the sacraments. Although Löhe, like Luther, has not bequeathed posterity with a major systematic discourse on theology—Christological questions and those of methodology and revelation do not surface—the author has done an admirable job at presenting a helpful overview or cross-section of it.

The short biographical introduction to Löhe’s life in chapter one has much in common with those that have already surfaced elsewhere among American Löhe scholars. But it does reveal the fact that Löhe’s theology, though unique, was fed from the theological movements of his time, be it Orthodoxy, Pietism, or Romanticism.

In chapter two Ratke begins to tread interesting ground as he pursues Löhe’s ecclesiology. He broaches important themes that are discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters. Löhe is projected as a theologian who insisted that the church by its proper definition as true believers—and hence invisible—must drive towards its visibility, the reality of word and sacrament. They are the distinctive marks by which a church’s confessional

and doctrinal purity must be measured. But the traditional signs of the church, its apostolicity and catholicity, do not fall by the wayside. Whereas the former underscores the biblical foundation of Löhe’s confessional principle, i.e. the word of truth that can trace its source back to the apostles, the latter draws attention to the one church catholic and its activities of mission and worship. Though the quest for truth and purity might seem to be incongruous with ecumenicity and the broader church catholic, Löhe, the author states, always wanted mission and worship to reflect both. Löhe defines mission as the movement of the church catholic, and worship should retain liturgical elements that are common with the catholic church of the past and present. Catholicity thus encourages historical liturgical forms that are not arbitrarily altered to the whim of participants at congregational level. According to Löhe, pastors, or the presbyterate as he calls it, are central in nurturing the apostolic truth, and they represent catholicity in the local congregations. For this reason, Löhe saw no need for congregations to send representatives to synodical meetings other than their pastor. This interesting polity put Löhe at odds with the more democratic structures of the Missouri Synod.

A further note in this chapter is Löhe’s contribution to the doctrine of the sacrament of the altar. In an age of Enlightenment where the eucharist had been relegated to near obscurity, Löhe brought it again to the fore and made it the second pillar in worship next to preaching. In fact, he promotes a sacramental community that practices a life of worship deeply grounded in the sacrament of the altar.

In his third chapter, the author introduces the reader to Löhe’s concept of ministries. Of the manifold ministries given to the church in biblical times, such as apostles, evangelists and deacons, the diaconal office alone survived. According to Löhe, it devotes itself to the acts of mercy and care on behalf of the congregation. The ordained ministry in the church or the *Amt* also finds its biblical and apostolic foundation. It resembles most the role and functions of the office of the presbyter. The basis of the office of ministry is clearly Christological for Löhe. Thus he takes a middle-of-the-road position with his American counterparts Walther, who made it congregation based, and Grabau, who sought its episcopal foundation. As a result, Löhe alienated himself with both.

Löhe also gives the rite of ordination a prominent status: it confers both the office and the gift necessary for the execution of the office. The responsibility to perform the ordination and thereby

confer the office rests upon the ordained presbyterate of the church. And yet, Löhe forthrightly dismisses any notion of apostolic succession.

In the fourth chapter, the author delineates a significant theme of Löhe's, namely that of liturgy and worship. Here one is introduced to the liturgy that upholds the word and sacrament as the unshaken center of worship. The relationship of both may be defined as a movement of preparation to reception.

An important contribution for home and abroad was Löhe's publication of the famous *Agende*. In it Löhe reveals his liturgical program. He borrowed elements such as prayers, collects, and the church year that are good and helpful. He chose those that embedded the worshipping community in the broader context of the catholic faith as it extends back to its historic "roots in the New Testament community and beyond to the church that can be found in every place." While often accused of being "Romanist" with such a program, Löhe selected his material and practices not in a romantic idealist fashion but rather to instill back elements that had been lost in his time. For this reason "his liturgical program might be described as an attempt to put catholic 'color' into the plain and monotonous liturgy that the Lutheran church had inherited from Rationalism" (128).

In chapter five, the author examines mission and proclamation. Next to ecclesiology and liturgics, mission was central to Löhe's thought. Löhe's interest in mission was certainly not sporadic, but it embraced his entire life, from the time he was a young student to when he formed and equipped individuals for mission work to the Indians and Germans in North America. An important qualification for his missiology are the terms *inner* and *outer mission*. For Löhe the dividing line between the two is the sacrament of baptism. To use the example of his North American mission project, one could classify the outreach to Germans as an inner mission, whereas the Indian mission is an outer mission. Both groups were embraced by the same goal of missions, which is to incorporate them into a worshipping community. Mission is all about inviting others to church. In this way, Löhe combined mission, community and liturgy into his missiology. Since Löhe was strongly confessional in his mission outlook, he cut all relations with Basel mission society and formed his own in Neuendettelsau. Pivotal in Löhe's strategic concept of mission is the community. In borrowing some of the ideals of the Irish-Scottish mission, he sought to send and establish a "colonist" community to North America. Through this colony he hoped to incorporate those to whom mission was done, in part the Indians. One obstacle to proper assimilation proved to be his adamant insistence on the German language for all Lutherans in North America; it became a point of contention between him and the Ohio Synod.

A significant part of Löhe's missiology is the role of the priesthood of all believers. Known for his *Amt* theology, Löhe was astonishingly broad based. Though a far cry from some of today's overly activist "conversion" models, Löhe's theology said that all believers motivated by love should participate in missions. The author perceptively detects a certain incongruity in Löhe's missiology with regard to the exact nature of such outreach. For example, Löhe did not know of an ordained missionary *Amt* and the service of the laity offers little to fill that gap. In

this sense Löhe's description of mission outreach lacks important specifics.

In chapter six the author describes Löhe's concept of inner and outer missions. He discusses the important role Löhe played in reestablishing the historic diaconal service. Seeing in it a legitimate ministry of the church, Löhe was determined not to let it die. It expresses the holistic character of God's love and mercy to the world, especially to a German people that was stricken at that time by adverse social conditions. One of Löhe's lasting achievements was his establishment of the Lutheran Association of Deaconesses (*Lutherischer Verein für weibliche Diakonie*), whose incumbents were educated to care for the sick, children, and the handicapped.

The author included in this chapter a section on Löhe's practice of church discipline. For the proper cultivation of right belief and confession, fellowship, and community, a church must practice proper discipline. For this reason, Löhe (re)introduced (private) confession and absolution.

In the final chapter, the author sets about the difficult task of assessing Löhe's legacy under the rubrics of order, catholicity, and ecumenism. Despite his confessional fervor, the author establishes that Löhe's catholicity and ecumenism never took a backseat. From there the author further proceeds to build a bridge between Löhe and the "evangelical catholic" movement of today that has taken root in North America's Lutheranism; both have set their sights on establishing catholic liturgical unity. Certainly Löhe's legacy might have common traits with the twentieth century theologies, but a reader might wonder whether Löhe would snugly fit into their shoes all the way. For Löhe's doctrinal and confessional concerns would certainly have made him uncompromising in liturgical movements that ignore doctrinal and confessional principles. In this case, Löhe speaks out clearly, the *lex credendi* defines the *lex orandi*, doctrine or confession evaluates and determines liturgy; a point the author makes earlier on (53) but fails to apply to this context.

On two other occasions the author bridges Löhe's legacy to the twentieth century. In the conclusion to the second chapter, the author finds in Löhe's ecclesiology common traits with that of the theologian Karl Rahner. Both emphasize community and a community's confession. In doing so, the author unfortunately breaks the rules of what a conclusion should be. He introduces so many new ideas, including Löhe's understanding of confessionality according to Augsburg Confession VII, that they should have been given separate treatment elsewhere.

The same applies to the conclusion of the third chapter. Here, too, the author unravels a new thought pattern of Löhe's understanding of the Holy Spirit. The author distinguishes between Luther and the Lutheran Confessions and claims that the soteriological thrust of the Lutheran Confessions of the Holy Spirit working through the word clips off a substantial part of Luther's and Löhe's ecclesiology that makes the Holy Spirit part of the church. The author finds similarities between Löhe and the twentieth century theologians Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This is a significant thesis indeed, but to place it in a conclusion truly does not give it due merit.

Further, it is unfortunate that the reader's curiosity as to what defense the author might have in store to alleviate some of the

criticisms against Löhe's theology (such as his chiliasm, church and ministry, language, doctrinal development, and liturgical worship practices) remains by and large unsatisfied. The depth and expanse of Löhe's theology certainly demands his repatriation—as Lutheran confessionalism has done with Hermann Sasse. To that end, and for many other good reasons, this book has made a significant contribution.

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Baptism. By David P. Scaer. Volume II of Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics. Northville, SD: Luther Academy, 1999.

After seminary, pastors are liable to fall into one of two ruts. Sometimes they get stuck in the “all I ever needed to know I learned in seminary” rut and never bother to crack the binding on a book or think beyond the parameters of dogmatics class. Other pastors get into the rut of being their own systematicians and are led down the garden path to silliness, concluding that it's acceptable to baptize without water—as reportedly happened in one Lutheran congregation. David P. Scaer's *locus* on baptism jolts the pastor out of both of these ruts and sets him on a refreshing course in the doctrine of holy baptism. Dr. Scaer postulates two propositions about baptism and the Christian life that govern his discussion of the dogma of baptism in this book. “This volume serves to present the Lutheran view that baptism is first the foundation of the Christian life, and then also its perpetual content” (4). A subtext that threads throughout the volume is a corollary to his famous “All theology is Christology,” namely that baptism is Christology too.

Scaer's first premise is that baptism is the bedrock of the Christian life. This is substantiated in positing baptism as the necessary remedy for original sin. In contradistinction to the Roman Catholic position that views baptism as imprinting an indelible spiritual mark on the baptized, thus focusing on an organic change in the person, Lutherans see baptism as the beginning of a new kinship with God. “For the Lutherans, baptism initiates not a *substantive* change, but a *new relationship* with God whereby the believer is brought into the realm of salvation” (14, emphasis original). This new relationship is necessary because of the horrific impact of original sin. “In Lutheran theology, the universal and complete moral depravity of mankind requires God's intervention into the human dilemma, which takes place for the individual in baptism” (17). The ritual of baptism gives this dogma shape when the devil is exorcised and again when the baptismal candidate renounces Satan (184).

Baptism forms the foundation for the Christian life because it is grounded in the Gospel imperative to baptize. Neglect of this command is “a rejection of the Christian message” and “an assault on the very foundation of the church” (27). Scriptural references to baptism as regeneration support the premise that it is the foundation of the Christian life. Discussing Titus 3:5 together with John 3:5, Scaer connects creation with baptism:

God in baptism “begins again” in us with a new creation by reestablishing the Holy Spirit in our lives. The language here reflects the working of the Spirit in Gn 1:2, who now in baptism is beginning a new creation. The thought of Ti 3:5 is not only that we are born again, but that God is creating us again and making us new in Baptism. In a real sense, Baptism is the new beginning of the new heavens and the new earth for the believer. What God does in Baptism in bringing forth new creations is as impressive as the creation in Genesis (60).

Baptism sets the boundaries for the Christian life by firmly planting it within the holy Christian church:

Baptism does inaugurate the baptized into the fellowship of the church, but this is not the church understood merely as an association of persons whose membership can be measured by sociological criteria. Rather, Baptism ushers the believer into that church which has been redeemed by Christ (Eph 5:25) and in which all the benefits which God has bestowed on Christ become the possession of the baptized (65).

Baptism can never be conceived of apart from ecclesiology, the new family into which the baptized is born. Being a member of this family gives the baptized the privilege of calling God “Father.” Thus the Christian begins his life in the church as a newborn baby craving the pure spiritual milk of God's word. This new relationship with God that is the foundation of the Christian life is illustrated in the *fides infantium*. Unlike the Baptists, who deny faith to infants, and many Roman Catholics who have imbibed the theology of the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults, Lutherans teach that infant faith and not adult faith is the norm for Christian life (154). The word of God is operative before, during and after baptism to create and sustain faith. The “sum and summary of faith” is “an honor which Lutherans gives to baptism” (200). Therefore, baptism is not only the foundation of the Christian life, but also must “stand at the foundation of our sacramental theology and practice” (201).

Scaer's second assertion that guides his treatment of baptism is that baptism is for life. It does not need to be repeated, but returned to and lived in by daily contrition and repentance. “Baptism . . . is what being a Christian is all about” (15). This is demonstrated in the relationship of baptism to original sin. Baptism “does not remove original sin, so that man now has a clean slate; rather, it is the continued and permanent promise of God to the believer” (14). Unlike the Roman church, which sees baptism as a remedy for original sin but then adds other sacraments that take one's eyes off baptism, Lutherans believe that baptism “embraces all of life, and not only original sin and those actual sins committed before Baptism” (15). Baptism is not an isolated sacrament in God's economy. According to Scaer it “project[s] this forgiveness into the Christian's entire life” (29). Thus confession is how baptism looks and how it is lived in the Christian's everyday life. Scaer demonstrates how Luther and Gerhard after him use circumcision to visualize that “Baptism is coterminus with the Christian life” (33). Both require faith, are for life and can constantly be referred back to, and are God's covenant

with his people. That baptism is the perpetual content of the Christian life is a unique Lutheran angle to the doctrine of holy baptism.

The baptismal assurance that sins are forgiven is not the memory of a past act, but a description of the believer's current situation. . . . Baptism is not something which merely happened once; it is something which is always happening (49–50).

With this up-to-the-minute, daily impact of baptism, no matter what sin, death, or the devil may lay in the way, the Christian is glad to say with Luther, "*baptizatus sum*," "I am baptized into Christ." Thus Scaer concludes, "At every stage of life, from infancy to death, Baptism is the constant divine reality for believers (200)." Baptism floods every nook and cranny of the Christian's life with the forgiveness of sins.

The Word made flesh is the first and final word of theology. Scaer's axiomatic "all theology is Christology" applies to baptism. Baptism is Christology. "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Rm 6:3). "Christ is not only one component of Baptism, but its *essence*" (13, emphasis original). What God does and gives in baptism is not in the future:

it is a present reality, because Christ Himself is present in the water of Baptism. This christological reality is the essence of Baptism; it gives shape to the rite, and in this way Baptism incorporates the baptized into Christ (18).

The real presence of Christ in baptism is such that "He is both the dispenser of grace and the *object* of faith" (25, emphasis original). Christ's own baptism by John in the Jordan is the foundation for Christian baptism. His subsequent death and resurrection fill it with meaning, uniting the baptized into Christ. Christ's institution of baptism, his word and command, is the core of the sacrament.

Christ instituted this sacrament and constituted its content. If Christ's institution of the sacrament is not accompanied by the understanding of Him as its sole content, then Baptism could be understood as Law Choosing between Baptism and Christ is a false alternative; Baptism is more than an instrument which leads to Christ, but it is the sacrament in which Christ is permanently present to the believer (51).

A false Christology leads to a false teaching of baptism. This is the pitfall of Calvin and his modern-day disciple Karl Barth. Scaer convicts them of a Nestorian sacramentalism, which separates the Holy Spirit from his means (107, 172). Likewise any Pentecostal notion that separates the giving of the Spirit from Christ is a false dichotomy.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit is sharing in the death of Jesus Baptism in the name of Jesus or the Trinity *is* baptizing in the Holy Spirit That the Spirit is given *during and after* Baptism is only a logical consequence of one's inclusion in Christ, who gives the Spirit (110, emphasis original).

The Christology of baptism is not some theological mind game. Scaer calls baptism "functioning Christology, because through it Christ acts to give Himself to the believer" (157). baptism simply cannot be grasped apart from Christology.

In Baptism Christ, that is, His divine and human person and His redemptive work, is present and made available to the believer. Through the one act of Baptism, Christ approaches the believer and the believer approaches Christ. Christ wins salvation for us, and in Baptism He applies His salvation (157).

To see baptism as Christology is to understand its significance not only in theology, but also in the church and most importantly in the Christian's life. Christ not only baptizes, the baptized are united to his death and resurrection, and the believer has access to Christ and his benefits for the rest of his life. "Jesus is at the same time both object and subject of baptism, the baptized and the baptizer (201).

The insights Scaer sheds in this book are not limited to the above mentioned. He introduces the reader to the significant study on Luther and baptism by Jonathan Trigg, now available in an economical paperback edition. He engages Gerhard in discussion on the meaning of baptism for the dead. In an excursus he discusses the futility of deriving the office of the holy ministry from baptism, an attempt advocates of women's ordination often revert to. In the religious pluralism of North America, Scaer's repeated references distinguishing Romanism, Calvinism, Reformed, Barthian, and Baptist theology on the doctrine of baptism is without parallel and preeminently helpful. He is sensitive to the various differences and helps to clarify them in the reader's mind. One particular aspect is helpful is sorting out the relationship of faith to baptism. Roman theology speaks of the faith of the church, Calvinist theology speaks of the faith of the parents, and Baptist theology considers faith to be a prerequisite to baptism. Scaer wades through these viewpoints and elucidates the Lutheran teaching. The differences are found in the definition of faith and the denial of infant faith (137, 147, 187).

Nor is this *locus* void of the practical. Perhaps one of the most difficult issues in pastoral care is dealing with parents whose child has died without baptism. Scaer admirably addresses this matter in an excursus as well as in chapters discussing infant faith and the necessity of baptism (120–121, 151, 159). In addition, the author weighs in on the ritual aspects of baptism, and his wisdom will no doubt be on the minds of those preparing the baptismal rite for the Missouri Synod's new hymnal. The most disappointing aspect of the book is its length. Two hundred pages do not seem enough for such a vital aspect of Christian life. But when it is considered that the previous standard textbook has less than forty pages on this *locus*, then Scaer's is a comprehensive examination by comparison. This volume is invaluable for providing a clear and engaging exposition of the doctrine of holy baptism for the twenty-first century church.

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Law, Life, and the Living God: The Third Use of the Law in Modern American Lutheranism. By Scott R. Murray. St. Louis: CPH, 2002. 250 pages. Paper.

✧ If *LOGIA* followed *Christianity Today* in awarding prizes to the most significant publications of the year, Murray's book would be a candidate for the top stop. *Law, Life, and the Living God* serves as a history of the Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the synods now comprising the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), as it is a fully developed theological treatise on one of the most beguiling issues to face Lutheranism continually since the Reformation. But it would be hard to offer another title that would do justice to the subject matter. The LCMS's self-understanding as a doctrinally pure church may have rendered its theologians reticent to evaluate its theology. So its pronouncements carry the force of a *de facto* infallibility. Murray overcomes this reluctance for self-evaluation.

The formation of Seminex in 1974 by the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, revealed a crack in doctrinal monolith whose aftershock led to dividing American Lutheranism into the LCMS and ELCA. Earlier books by Kurt Marquart, Fred Danker and John Tietjen saw biblical methods used, the faculty, and the role of LCMS president J. A. O. Preus as pivotal in bringing about the split. As his yardstick Murray uses how the third use of the law was understood among American Lutherans from 1940 to 1998. Different commitments to Article Six of the Formula of Concord divided the combatants into traditionalists, who saw the law as a factor in Christian life and "the Gospel reductionists," who saw the gospel and not law as normative for Christian behavior. Subsequent decisions by the ELCA show that the fears among traditionalists that "Gospel reductionism" would lead to anti-nomianism were not unfounded. At that time this position was called "the Valparaiso theology," after the university with which most of its proponents were associated. "Gospel reductionism" also reflected their hermeneutical approach, which allowed excising the miraculous from the biblical accounts. This remains an ecumenical principle for the ELCA, which calls for church fellowship with any church having the gospel, for example, Episcopalians, Reformed, and Moravians. Murray's study is limited to how Lutheran theologians saw the role of law in Christian life.

An introductory chapter reviews Reformation-era events leading up to setting forth the Lutheran positions on the law in Article Six of the Formula of Concord, as well as negative reactions to it by Werner Elert and Robert C. Schultz. The second chapter surveys Barth's inversion of gospel-law and the intrusion of European thought into American Lutheran theology. A key player in this was F. E. Mayer, a Saint Louis professor who represented the LCMS at conferences with German theologians at Bad Boll in 1948–1949, where he met Elert. Brought up in the confessional Lutheran Breslau Synod in Prussia, where Lutherans and Reformed had been forced into one church, Elert had a dislike for the third use of the law, which for Calvin was its major use. Impressed with Elert, Mayer began to integrate Elert's position into his own. The subtitle of the third chapter, *American Lutheranism 1961–1976*, is "A Period for Extremes," which speaks for itself. During this period

the positions of each side were shaped, and the period ended with several hundred congregations leaving the LCMS. In the final chapter Murray lays out how theologians in both synods in the aftermath (1977–1998) regarded the law in Christian life.

Since the tumultuous events of the 60s and 70s, many of the adversaries have left the theological battlefield either by death or retirement. In 1983, the year of Murray's ordination, much of the dust had already settled. Detached from the earlier events but acquainted with some theologians still active at the end of the century, he provides a balanced analysis of theological issues without cold neutrality. A word of caution is given to pastors over fifty who are likely to find analyses of favored professors: Pelikan, Forell, Pieper, F. E. Mayer, Caemmerer, Bertram, Schroeder, Walter Bartling, Robert Hoyer, Paul G. Bretscher, Walter Bouman, Robert Schultz, George Forell, Theodore Jungkuntz, Lazareth, Yeago, Eggold, and the undersigned. Readers may be surprised to learn that Jungkuntz defended the traditionalist position against "the Valparaiso theology," the university where he was then a professor.

At least thirty-five years ago I was fascinated with *The Formation of the American Lutheran Church* (ALC) by Fred Meuser, later to become president of Trinity Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. Written as a Yale doctoral dissertation about the formation of the Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio synods into the old ALC, it provided a window into the LCMS's history. With his doctoral dissertation published under the title *Law, Life, and the Living God*, Murray has kept another window open into another era of that history. Those who lived through the 60s and 70s should have the courage or at least the curiosity to read Murray's analysis. Others must read it to understand why American Lutheranism is divided organizationally the way it is. It seems that the copy editors are responsible for *Zeitentheologen* (62) and *Zeitentheologie* (146), which would be unfamiliar even to Germans. Clearly the author had *Zitatentheologen* and *Zitatentheologie*, a theology which clutters the page with quotations from other theologians. If there is such a German word as *Zeitentheologie*, it would be translated as contemporary or modern theology, which would hardly be applicable to Walther or the old LCMS. Though "the Gospel reductionists" took their cue from Elert, it would be unfair to hold him responsible for their theology. Confessional Lutheranism still lives from his legacy, part of which is that the Lutheran understanding of the third use of the law dare not be confused with the Reformed view, though I suspect it often is.

Perhaps it is too much to hope that other studies of the same high caliber as Murray's would soon appear before the living witnesses of those days are gone, which is another way of saying, would that we might see ourselves the way others do. Murray's impeccable style is approachable, even for the uninitiated.

Before opening the book, readers will note back cover endorsements by Richard John Neuhaus and Leonard R. Klein, who in the 1970s were sympathetic to the position of the Saint Louis faculty, and J. A. O. Preus III, whose father led the LCMS during this critical period. These recommendations are well deserved.

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Not unto Us: A Celebration of the Ministry of Kurt J. Eggert. Edited by William H. Braun and Victor H. Prange. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2001. 266 pages. \$14.99.

✦ In the recent history of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), Kurt Eggert was known not only as a parish pastor in the Milwaukee area but, more broadly, as a leader in church music for the Wisconsin Synod as a whole. He was a member of the Commission on Liturgy, Hymnody, and Worship (now the Commission on Worship) from its inception in 1963. Twenty years later, when the Synod resolved to begin work on a new hymnal, Eggert was called from his pastoral ministry at Atonement Lutheran in Milwaukee to be the full-time director of the hymnal project that produced *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993). Eggert died on 22 June 1993, but five days earlier the president of the Synod, Carl Mischke, was able to present the first bound copy of *Christian Worship* to Pastor Eggert at his bedside. What doubtless would have pleased Pastor Eggert was the absolutely astonishing rate at which *CW* was accepted by WELS congregations. Only three years after publication of *CW*, the 1996 Report to the Twelve Districts stated that the hymnal “has been ordered by more than 95 percent of our synod’s congregations” (252). *Not unto Us*, titled after one of Eggert’s hymns (*CW* 392), celebrates not only Eggert’s role in producing *Christian Worship*, but also his lifelong interest in and dedication to worship and music in the WELS.

The longest essay in the volume, Victor H. Prange’s “The Shaping of *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*,” provides a fascinating inside look at the work of the Hymn Committee and the Liturgy Committee, together forming the Joint Hymnal Committee (JHC), which began its work in January 1985. What makes this essay so fascinating is Prange’s use of his own diary and the minutes of the JHC as primary source documents. The reader is able, for example, to witness some of the committee debate on hymn texts and tunes, including “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (199–204). Throughout Prange’s article one is able to see Eggert guiding the project, as, for example, in thirty-five discussion questions he prepared for the 1985 orientation for members of the JHC (175–176). Illustrative of Eggert’s work as project director is the title of the last article he wrote for the *Northwestern Lutheran*: “Pressing on to the Future and Holding on to Our Past.” Throughout his essay Prange shows that Eggert, in his role as hymnal project director, had this important ability to identify and hold on to the best of a rich heritage while simultaneously drawing on newer influences and confidently pressing on to the future. Prange notes that Eggert “was God’s special gift to the Wisconsin Synod in shaping a new hymnal” (241).

Ralph D. Gehrke discusses an earlier—and no less valuable—dimension of Eggert’s work in the area of worship and music. From 1955–1961 Gehrke and Eggert collaborated to produce thirteen issues of their semiannual newsletter *Viva Vox*, “The Living Voice” [of the Gospel]. Gehrke tells us that they saw their work as “part of a much broader movement of church music renewal” (115), that they “agreed on the need for renewal action, lest our precious heritage be lost” (123), and that they undertook the “task of reclaiming a godly heritage that was in great danger” (116). Fortunately, the reader of this volume finds two excerpts from

Viva Vox in editor William H. Braun’s compilation of “Selected Essays on Worship and Music by Kurt Eggert” (7–78). In the first excerpt Eggert offers advice to the new choir director, urging that what the choir sings must fit the dual contexts of the liturgy and the church year. He refers to the choir as “the musically trained part of the congregation”:

The choir should, therefore, participate only when it is “substituting” for the rest of the congregation in one of the regular parts of the service . . . The choir should, however, never add songs merely “in order to beautify the service,” as if the congregation could be treated as a sort of listening concert-audience. Too many present-day choirs suffer from *anthenitis*, the “disease” of now and then adding concertlike special musical contributions to the service . . . (8–9).

In the other essay reprinted from *Viva Vox*, Eggert urges the parish musician to plan music carefully, “build[ing] your organ and choir music around the Hymn of the Week each Sunday,” thereby “integrat[ing] the whole service” (13). This advice, written in 1958–59, is as valid and valuable today as it was then, perhaps even more so, for, as readers of this journal will understand, we today must still be engaged in the “task of reclaiming a godly heritage that [is] in great danger.” Parenthetically, it is worth noting that *Viva Vox* was not Eggert’s last publication endeavor in church music. For the Commission on Worship he edited *Focus on Worship* from 1971 to 1987, a newsletter-length publication that was filled with good advice, always succinctly and winsomely stated.

James P. Tiefel contributes a historical essay on “The Formation and Flow of Worship Attitudes in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.” While offering the modest disclaimer that his essay “is narrative and anecdotal . . . without documentation,” the fact is that he has provided an interesting and insightful essay that 1) delineates the broad trends from the time of Luther to the early nineteenth century, and 2) provides a skillful summary of the history of worship and music in the Wisconsin Synod. He gives a clear picture of the pietistic influences that shaped WELS worship attitudes well into the twentieth century, noting that “Wisconsin’s move away from Pietism was neither smooth nor swift . . .” (147). That some WELS parishes (and LCMS parishes) today exhibit many of the characteristics of pietism in their worship life does not mean that they never moved past pietism; rather, they have—in part by the influence of church growth theories—returned to precisely the kind of pietism that Tiefel describes:

They became less inclined to focus on God’s working through the means of grace (since they couldn’t see results) and more inclined to focus on how they lived and how they felt about God (responses they could see) (145).

Here one recalls Gehrke’s words about the urgent “task of reclaiming a godly heritage that [is] in great danger.” Tiefel’s essay is very well done and should be required reading for all who seek yet again to renew, reclaim, and reform Lutheran music and worship.

In “Hymnody and the Proclamation of the Gospel,” Carl F. Schalk provides another of his masterful essays that, drawing on Luther, points us again to what it really means to proclaim the

gospel in our hymnody. He cites hymn texts from the early church, the Reformation, and the present day (hymns by Ronald Klug and Jaroslav J. Vajda) that illustrate the hymn as proclamation of the gospel. Perhaps most important of all in his essay he reminds us:

God is praised when the gospel is rightly proclaimed; and, conversely, the proclamation of the gospel is the way that God is rightly praised. There is no artificial division between songs that “proclaim” and others that “praise”: unless “praise songs” proclaim the good news of the gospel, they are not, in any Christian sense, praise songs at all (138).

Finally, there are valuable portions of the book that focus directly on Kurt Eggert. William H. Braun provides a listing of “Texts, Tunes, and Compositions by Kurt Eggert.” Ruth Eggert contributes a biographical sketch of her husband, and Mary Prange (Eggert’s successor as director of the Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee) together with Peggy Henning reflect on Eggert’s leadership of this WELS choral group.

This volume is valuable not only as a “celebration of the ministry of Kurt J. Eggert,” it is also a stimulating read for all who continue to care about the worship and music of the Lutheran church. In his efforts through *Viva Vox* “to stimulate improvements of the music in our church services” (8), Eggert was invariably right on the mark as he identified and dealt with core issues in worship and music. These core areas continue to require our attention today, and we can learn much from Pastor Kurt Eggert’s work in the field that he so loved.

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Isaiah 40–66. By John A. Braun. The People’s Bible. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2001. 407 pages. Paper.

❖ As the name suggests, the WELS commentary series, *The People’s Bible*, is written to be theologically accessible by the “people” (read: “laity”) of the church. This is potentially problematic since much of what passes itself off these days as laity-centered literature is in fact quite infantile in its shallowness and quite shocking in its unlutheran and de-lutheranizing tendencies.

But fear not. John Braun’s commentary on the latter half of Isaiah does not belong in the category of such literary riffraff. The work is highly lucid, thoroughly theological, and Christocentric in its exegetical approach. As an added bonus, the reader finds woven into the fabric of the work numerous quotes from Luther’s writings along with several selections from the excellent commentary *Isaiah II* by August Pieper. Although Braun’s understanding that certain sections of Isaiah point simultaneously toward two future events (e.g., the return from exile and the deliverance wrought by Christ) will get under some readers’ hermeneutical skins, others will rightly applaud his approach as consistent with the biblical witness.

This volume does not intend, of course, to be a replacement of Pieper’s work or any other traditional commentary, but it is a nice complement, especially if you’re seeking something worthwhile to place in the hands of the interested layperson. This volume, along with Braun’s treatment of Isaiah 1–39, would be a helpful companion to any student of Isaiah.

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Law and Gospel: Philip Melanchthon’s Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia. By Timothy J. Wengert. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997. Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought Series. 232 pages.

❖ This book by the professor of the history of Christianity at The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia is the second volume reflecting his “work on Philip Melanchthon’s three commentaries on Colossians published between 1527 and 1534” (10). Wengert describes the history of the first major public dispute between Luther’s students Melanchthon and Agricola. What started out as an exegetical dispute on the proper understanding of the role of *poenitentia* and good works in parts of the New Testament turned into a fervent catechetical struggle on the proper instruction of the faithful concerning their new life.

Under the title “Calm before the Storm” Wengert examines Agricola’s biblical exegesis in the years 1525–27 on Luke and Colossians. The dispute with Melanchthon was not yet explicit, but Agricola, of course, knew about Melanchthon’s views on *poenitentia* and the law from his works on Romans and his early *Loci*. Agricola took a very pronounced and alternative position. His aim was to keep justification by faith free from any human activity. He therefore considered it necessary to identify *poenitentia* with the new life of the Christian and understood it as an effect of the gospel and not the law. Faith, according to Agricola, needs no instruction. The contrast between Agricola’s and Melanchthon’s teaching can very clearly be seen in Agricola’s German translation of Melanchthon’s notes on St. Paul’s letters to the Romans and the Corinthians. Here Agricola did not only translate, but he inserted his own views where Melanchthon put forth theses Agricola did not consent with. For example, the accusation of the law, which in Melanchthon’s eyes leads to *poenitentia*, the presupposition for forgiveness of sins, in Agricola’s eyes can only lead to anger and desperation. Agricola proved himself to be unwilling to attribute any positive function to the law. In his eyes faith precedes the mortification of the sinner. As a consequence he considered absolution and especially private absolution unnecessary. True *poenitentia*, in his opinion, would not mean *to be terrified by one’s sin and to ask for and receive forgiveness*, but it would mean *to refrain from sin*.

That this implicit controversy turned into an open conflict was due to the necessity of creating proper catechetical material for the congregations. The huge onslaught of catechetical literature between 1522–1529 was the context in which the conflict finally became visible. Both Agricola and Melanchthon tried their best,

and both were eager to present their views on *poenitentia* and the law in their catechetical works. In his *Scholia* and in the *Visitation Articles* of 1527 Melanchthon openly attacked preachers who taught contempt for all laws—human and divine. The tempest finally broke out when Agricola attacked Melanchthon's Articles in his own catechetical work "*130 Fragestücke*." Wengert clearly shows how the law, which Agricola wanted to extinguish from Christian teaching and preaching would creep back under disguise when Agricola insisted on rules for the Christian's struggle against the sparks of sin. Here it also becomes obvious that Agricola still had the old "Roman" understanding of sin in the faithful as "*fomes peccati*." Wengert summarizes:

What Agricola could not imagine was a complex human being in whom the old and the new still struggle. The very *simul*, to which Luther in his letter to Melanchthon quite naturally reached to solve the war of words, was the very thing Agricola rejected in his attempt to make Christians whole through the gospel (130).

Wengert shows how the revisions of the *Visitation Articles* and even Luther's catechisms and Melanchthon's later writings, including the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, must be understood in light of or partially even as a result of Agricola's conflict with Melanchthon. Some aspects were formulated more clearly in order to rule out some of Agricola's reproaches. Other aspects were emphasized even more strongly, for example the importance of the Ten Commandments in the life of the Christian and the importance of absolution for the Christian as *simul iustus et peccator*. Wengert seems to follow Melanchthon's own interpretation of the whole conflict twenty-five years later in the midst of the Majorist controversy, "that the controversy over the Visitation Articles served as the headwaters for the flood that followed" (174).

Wengert finishes his historic book with a dogmatic focus in the last chapter. The controversy with Agricola is no longer the topic, but the search for the origins of the third use of the law. Wengert claims that the controversy with Agricola was responsible for a shift in Melanchthon's theology. In the *Scholia* of 1534 Melanchthon for the first time explicitly increased the number of the functions of the law from two to three. Wengert's thesis is the following: Unlike in his Apology and in the Augsburg Confession, in the thirties, Melanchthon more and more stressed the forensic-imputative character of justification. Whereas in the Apology he spoke of sanative justification also, and of regeneration and growth of faith, he later stressed the obedience to the law. Wengert also sees another shift in Melanchthon insofar as consolation more and more was not ascribed to the gospel but to the knowledge of doctrine. His *loci*-method forced Melanchthon to count the functions of the law. The theological reason, however, was the emphasis on forensic justification, which in turn made it necessary to talk intensively about the making of the new life of the Christian. Wengert's estimation of the late Melanchthon therefore is ambiguous: "Thus the third use of the law arose in part to exclude human works from salvation. However, Melanchthon had also succeeded in putting legal conditions back into Christian life" (200).

The reader wonders if the shift in Melanchthon's thinking on the law and obedience is really that strong as Wengert implies.

After all, the Augsburg Confession has two articles on new obedience and on the good works of the believer; and in Apology Art. iv Melanchthon is talking about the *impletio legis* as fruit of justification by faith alone.

Nevertheless Wengert gives important hints concerning the origin of some problematic solutions in Melanchthon's theology. First there is his very strong interest in how to formulate the Christian doctrine in a pedagogically helpful way. Then there is Melanchthon's appliance of the *loci*-method with the concept of the causes (*causae*) which he also applied when he talked about the law (rather than the term *usus*).

Wengert does not really give his solution on the discussion of the third use of the law. His interest is mainly historical. But his results help to understand the making of the solutions which are exposed in the Lutheran Confessions, especially in the catechisms and in the Formula of Concord.

Thus his book gives important insights into rather unknown theological discussions in which Luther was not at center stage. At the same time he fills an important gap in the history of Reformation theology by exploring the history that preceded the later antinomian controversies between Luther and Agricola (1537–1540) and between Luther's students after his death; controversies which finally were settled in the Formula of Concord in a way which up to this day is helpful to avoid both plagues of Christianity: legalism and antinomianism.

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Scripture and Tradition. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue ix. Edited by Harold C. Skillrud, J. Francis Stafford, and Daniel F. Martensen. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1995. 62 pages.

✦ This ninth joint statement of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in the United States (since 1965) takes up the central topic of theology which "has always been a component of this dialogue" (20). The partners in dialogue present their results in five steps or chapters.

The first step is the question of what both churches mean when they say, "Word of God." Both can identify the word of God in a threefold manner: Jesus Christ himself is the eternal Word of God. The word of God is God's message to mankind, proclaimed as judgment and mercy throughout history. Then there is the written word of God, Holy Scripture, inspired by the Holy Spirit, centering in Christ.

The "Evolution of the Problem" of how scripture and tradition relate is exposed in the second chapter. One refers to the elementary sense of *paradosis/traditio* as "the act of transmitting the divine message from person to person" (25) which in early Christianity took place through the Old Testament, the community's memory of Jesus, the writings of the New Testament, baptism, and the eucharist, teachings, disciplines, and creedal formulations, ecclesiastical structures and offices, and artistic expressions and liturgical practices. Traditions in the following history "extended the

original meaning of Scripture” (26), so the problem of authority and degrees of authority arose—a problem that was very urgent in the middle ages. The relationship between scripture and tradition then became very critical when Luther stressed the “Sola Scriptura.” However, since the Reformation also put a strong emphasis on the *viva vox evangelii*, there was something that can be called a “traditioning activity” in analogy to what Roman Catholics understand as *actus tradendi*, “the handing on of the Word in a given context” (27). Luther’s concept of the twofold clarity of scripture and of scripture being its own interpreter does not, however, mean a rejection of tradition per se, but “rather that Scripture establishes itself as the final arbiter in matters of faith and life, particularly in cases of dispute” (29). The concept of “Sola Scriptura” does not exclude the exegetical and confessing activity of the church, but it points to the ultimate judge of all the church’s activities. The confessions’ authority after all is not original, but derivative.

The Council of Trent was followed by a majority of Roman Catholic interpreters who were advocates of two sources of faith, scripture and tradition. The Second Vatican Council with its dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum* then opened the door for a “convergence between Catholic and Lutheran understandings” (32; compare p. 38) by presenting “Scripture, tradition, and teaching office” as “distinct but interrelated elements that contribute to the communication of God’s saving grace in Christ” (33).

On this basis the “Theological Considerations” in chapter 3 claim that there is a possibility of convergence, because both sides share a positive understanding of the term “tradition” as involving “a process in a community; in this case, it refers to the word of God precisely as it is handed on in the church: *verbum Dei traditum*” (36). Problems remain, however, since the Vatican Council left “unresolved questions about the necessity of criticism of tradition and the teaching office, and about the critical principle to be followed in conflict” (40).

The ground for further convergence is laid in chapter 4: “The Living Word in the Community of Faith.” The partners in dialogue refer to the fact that both churches do accept interpretations of the biblical dogma that go “beyond the express statement of Scripture” (44), like the doctrine of the trinity or of Mary being the *theotokos*. When Roman Catholics, however, can formulate the doctrine of Mary’s assumption they do not only refer to scripture but also to the *sensus fidelium*, the consensus of the teaching office and of the faithful which is “considered by Catholics to be a sign of the working of the Holy Spirit, who leads the whole church into the truth of revelation” (46).

Finally “Conclusions” are formulated in chapter 5, stating the “large measure of agreement” and the “remaining differences of doctrine or emphasis” (49). Differences remain on the “Sola Scriptura,” on the question of an infallible teaching office, and on the respective understandings of the development of doctrine.

Nevertheless the conclusion ends hopefully by stressing once more the Lutheran “dynamic understanding of the word of God that approximates what Catholics often understand as tradition in the active sense: the Spirit-assisted ‘handing on’ of God’s revelation in Christ,” by furthermore stressing the fact that Catholics do not any longer speak of tradition as a separate source of doctrine, “but see it together with Scripture, as the Word of God for the life

of the church” (50), and by finally stressing “the joint affirmation of the one faith in Christ alone that is communicated fundamentally and abidingly in Holy Scripture” (51).

The main reason why we cannot be as optimistic as the partners in dialogue is that from a Lutheran point of view scripture in dogmatic terms cannot be submitted to any notion or idea of “tradition.” There is indeed a living and very positive relationship between scripture and the church with her tradition. But one has the impression that even when exposing the historic positions the partners in dialogue do already apply their understanding, which is not in compliance with the Lutheran Reformation. Of course, Christ through his Spirit is at work in the church, in the formulation of the creeds, in the liturgy, and in theology. Scripture, however, in this setting or context in the post-apostolic age represents the authority of Jesus Christ himself, of the Triune God over against his church. This means that in the process of the tradition or *paradosis* of the word of God through scripture the church, its preaching, teaching, and confessing is first of all passive, receiving and not active or even creative. Interestingly enough, the supporters of the ordination of women in Lutheran churches are arguing exactly like the Roman Catholics: If consensus is achieved between the church leaders and the faithful this can be considered as a work of the Holy Spirit, since we all have the Holy Spirit and the Spirit is working also in church history and, of course, in present church life, leading the church into the truth of revelation.

The Lutheran emphasis on the *viva vox*, however, always meant the public doctrine, which has to flow from and to be judged by scripture. The Spirit’s working and proclamation of the word of God cannot be identified with the living community of the Christians as such and as a whole; there has been false teaching, false preaching, and false confessing in the history of the church—even from its beginnings. If scripture is only part of the church’s tradition one indeed needs an infallible teaching office in order to ascertain what is God’s will for his church.

The problem also can be located in the fact that the present statement talks about material sufficiency of Scripture only (37). But the sufficiency of Scripture does also include its efficacy, which means, theologically speaking, it is Christ through the scriptures who creates faith and the church, who continues to proclaim the law and the gospel. And it is not the tradition of the church or the living community that is in charge of keeping the word of God alive. But the word of God in scripture keeps the church, the tradition, the faith, the believer alive. The “Sola Scriptura” principle is nothing else than the confession that Christ is the ruling subject, the head of the church. A church, however, that cannot discern the word of Christ from its own word any longer has become what the Lutheran confession calls “antichristian.” Even though the partners in dialogue see the problem of ambiguity in public opinion (47) and therefore make a difference between public opinion in the church and the “sense of the faithful,” one cannot see how this dilemma can be avoided when the church in this joint statement is seen as the active subject rather than the receiving object of the traditioning process of the word through scripture.

But perhaps the mistake lies even at another point. After all, in the “Theological Considerations” and in the “Conclusion” there is no mentioning of the eschatological “context” or setting in which

Luther and the Reformation wanted to rely on Christ alone—and therefore on scripture alone. The aim of the Reformation was to consent with Christ, with his eternal judgment, and not in the first place with this or that Christian tradition. Consensus with the Christ and the Spirit of Holy Scripture was of highest importance for the Reformation, which even made a clear dissensus within the visible church necessary for Christ's sake and for the sake of the believers' and the church's salvation. The understandable aim of reaching visible Christian unity should never obscure this.

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BRIEFLY NOTED

Readings in Christian Ethics (Volumes 1 and 2). Edited by David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

✧ Clark and Rakestraw, professors of theology at Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, have teamed up to produce a two-volume anthology of readings in the theory and method (volume 1) and issues and applications (volume 2) of Christian ethics. The majority of the selections in this collection are from a broad spectrum of evangelical Protestant theologians and ethicists. Volume 1 includes essays in four major categories: Establishing moral norms, applying moral norms, interpreting the Bible ethically, and moral development. The second volume offers a variety of readings on such issues as abortion, euthanasia, reproductive technology, gender issues, homosexuality, civil disobedience, capital punishment, marriage, divorce, and war. Intended for use in college ethics courses, these two volumes would provide the pastor or interested lay person with a helpful compendium of a variety of responses to current ethical issues from multiple theological perspectives.

Cutting-Edge Bioethics: A Christian Exploration of Technologies and Trends. Edited by John F. Kilner, Christopher Hook, and Diann Uustal. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

✧ This volume is yet another contribution of the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity in Bannockburn, Illinois. The editors state:

Most frightening about our day, however, is not the development of new technologies. Rather, it is the fact that technologies with this much power are arising at a time when humanity may not be capable of developing them responsibly. We find ourselves in an environment increasingly relativistic, morally adrift, and hostile to God. A true understanding of human nature and our responsibilities to our

Creator and each other have been replaced with a materialistic nihilism giving birth to a school of thought called *transhumanism* (ix–x).

Essays in this volume come from theologians and ethicists as well as Christian physicians and medical researchers. The writers address emerging technologies as well as the cultural context that shapes moral deliberation on these issues.

The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: Volume 4. The Age of the Reformation. By Hughes Oliphant Old. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

✧ Old's latest contribution to his impressive project of chronicling the history of homiletics is a volume of over 550 pages that seeks to cover the Reformation as well as post-Reformation (late sixteenth through early eighteenth century) developments. It comes as no surprise that Old begins with Luther; what is surprising is that Old devotes a mere forty pages to the great Reformer, relying in large part on secondary texts such as Ebeling, Althaus and Vatja. Little attention is given to the law-gospel dynamic of Luther's preaching or to the centrality of God's justification of the ungodly in Luther's sermons. Actually only the first 157 pages of this book are devoted to preaching in the Reformation; the remainder of the volume covers Counter-Reformation preaching, the Puritans, Anglican sermons, preaching in the Age of Protestant Orthodoxy, and preaching in the age of Louis XIV. While Old's treatment of Luther is wanting, the book contains much valuable information on the content and style of preaching in the Reformation and beyond.

Luther Digest: An Annual Abridgement of Luther Studies: Volume 9. Edited by Kenneth Haugen. St. Louis: Luther Academy—USA, 2001.

✧ This most recent edition of *Luther Digest* contains summations of leading articles and books in the field of Luther research. The 2001 edition organizes the summaries under seven headings: The two orders, Luther and the tradition, theology of the cross, freedom of the will, ecumenical significance, the pastoral Luther, and special issues. *Luther Digest* is an invaluable tool for the pastor who wishes to keep abreast with the ever-expanding field of Luther scholarship.

The New Dictionary of Pastoral Studies. Edited by Wesley Carr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

✧ The New Dictionary of Pastoral Studies provides brief entries by 212 scholars on some 800 topics related to pastoral care. Topics related to psychological or clinical aspects of pastoral care seem to be given preference over theological, liturgical, or churchly themes. For example, one finds articles on "catharsis" and "depth psychology" but nothing on "catechesis."

LOGIA Forum

SHORT STUDIES AND COMMENTARY

THE ORIGIN OF INDULGENCES

In this excerpt from his commentary on Genesis 43:1, Luther relates the practice of indulgences to an event that occurred some nine hundred years earlier. (American Edition of Luther's Works, volume 7, pages 296–297.)

Gregory alone is the originator of the fables about purgatory. He also originated the Masses for the dead. Somewhere he tells that there was a certain steward in his monastery who by chance and negligence left three guldens among his papers. When Gregory found these after the man's death, he had made a terrific uproar about the deceased man and had cried out that the man was accursed because of the crime of thievery and would be subject to eternal punishments, although it was likely that this monk had had greater opportunity to steal in other respects; yet nothing had been pilfered by him, but this money had lain hidden among his papers without his knowledge. Yet Gregory declares that by this example and as a result of his shouting the others were so terrified that from then on no one of them was willing to keep back even a heller. Finally, however, Gregory ordered thirty Masses to be said for the man, and when these had been completed—so he writes—this steward appeared to him and thanked him profusely for the great service by which he had been freed from punishments and the curse of God.

This was undoubtedly the “strong delusion” referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2:11, and from this example of Gregory there spread into the whole world that infinite multitude of abominations and the offering of the sacrament for the dead. But the specter which appeared to him was the devil in all his wickedness,

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who came out of hell to mock the whole human race. For the horrible and rash falsehood of purgatory and Masses for the dead exceeds all understanding and power of speech.

It is a long story, and long are the roundabout ways of the traffickings by which the Pope and the cardinals have acquired unlimited wealth. For there have been monstrous practices, sacrileges, and acts of rapine without number. Indeed, look at all the monasteries and temples that have been erected at no other costs than the money spent to buy offerings for the dead. For this purpose the whole world piled up its wealth to liberate souls from the tortures of purgatory.

There is no doubt that Christ speaks chiefly and particularly about the profanation of the Lord's Supper—the profanation with which they made of the Mass a sacrifice for the living and the dead—when He says in Matthew 24:15: “So when you see the desolating sacrifice spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand).” For this was a diabolical shrine and monstrosity. But for them it was most suitable for gain and for the acquiring of wealth, dominion, and power over all the kingdoms of the earth.

But the doctrine of the Gospel, which bears witness that the godly are asleep and at rest in Christ, refutes and cancels this whole piece of godlessness concerning the offering of the body and blood of Christ to be made for the dead. Accordingly, they do not fear any punishments of purgatory which the living could buy off for themselves with gold and silver.

CREDAL HYMNS

The following originally appeared in Lutheran Quarterly xii (Spring 1998) in an article by Robin Leaver entitled “Luther's Catechism Hymns: 3. Creed.” The article was part of an ongoing series by Leaver on each of Luther's catechism hymns. This excerpt is from pp. 85–86. “The hymn” in the first sentence is, of course, Luther's “Wir Glauben.”

Although the hymn is included in contemporary American Lutheran hymnals, it does not seem to be sung often in the churches, except perhaps in some Missouri Synod congregations. Three of the four hymnals [LBW, LW, and ELH, but now CW] include an outline of a “Chorale Service,” based on

Luther's *Deutsche Messe* of 1526, and all three specify Luther's "We all believe in one true God" as the credal hymn. However, this option is not frequently used, and, in congregations using the hymnals of the Missouri and Evangelical Lutheran Synods, one suspects that when the chorale service is used the credal hymn by Thomas Clausnitzer—with the same first line—is sung, rather than Luther's. The reason is almost certainly musical. The tune associated with Clausnitzer's text, first published in Darmstadt in 1699, is a "modern" tune in a regular meter, whereas Luther's sturdy tune in the Dorian mode, dating from the early fifteenth century, is perceived to be archaic, with an unusual metrical structure, and an elaborate melisma on the second syllable of the first line.

Multiculturalism, rightly understood, has chronological as well as geographical dimensions, and our worship is enriched when we sing such hymns of faith that originate in earlier times and under different conditions than our own. The faith does not change but expression of it does. In our frenetic world we need to sing such expressions of theological praise that are more concerned with the timelessness of the substance of what we believe, instead of singing only in a currently fashionable style that will also go out-of-date. Further, our contemporary popular culture is not as monolithic and all-pervasive as some would have us believe. Witness the huge popularity of Gregorian chant recordings in recent years—as well as recordings of chant-related music, such as the compositions of the twelfth-century Hildegard von Bingen, on the one hand, and such twentieth-century compositions as those by Arvo Part and John Tavener, on the other.

There is a certain irony in the fact that at a time when some within our churches are seeking to eliminate our specific traditions of church music, many more in our secular society outside the churches are embracing such music as the aural expression of a spirituality that contrasts strongly with the brash sounds of the propaganda music of our time.

We need the continuity of Luther's credal hymn, with its different perspective on time and eternity, the hymn that teaches rather than simply exhorts, that confesses faith rather than simply defines it dogmatically, that is evangelical without confusing evangelism with worship, or vice versa.

THE IDEALIZATION OF POVERTY

John Witte Jr.'s new book further demonstrates that the Reformation greatly impacted many areas of life besides the church and theology. In particular, Witte shows how civil law was transformed in a way that still influences our practice today. The following excerpt is found on pages 20–21 of Law and Protestantism: The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation with a forward by Martin E. Marty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

The Lutheran reformers rejected traditional teachings of both the spiritual idealization of poverty and the spiritual efficaciousness of charity. All persons were called to do the work of God in the world, they argued; they were not to be

idle or impoverished. Voluntary poverty was a form of social parasitism to be punished, not a symbol of spiritual sacrifice to be rewarded. Only the worthy local poor deserved charity, and only if they could not be helped by their immediate family members, the family being the "first school of charity."

Charity, in turn, was not a form of spiritual self-enhancement; it was a vocation of the priesthood of believers. Charity brought no immediate spiritual reward to the giver; it was designed to bring spiritual opportunity to the receiver. Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone undercut the spiritual efficacy of charity for the giver. But Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers enhanced the spiritual reward for the receiver. It induced him to see the good works brought by faith, and so be moved to have faith himself.

The Lutheran reformers also rejected the traditional belief that the Church was the primary object and subject of charity. The Church was called to preach the Word, to administer the sacraments, and to discipline the saints. For the local church to receive and administer charity beyond its immediate congregation detracted from its primary ministry. For the church to run monasteries, almshouses, charities, hospices, orphanages, and more detracted from its essential mission.

The local parish church should continue to receive the tithes of its members, as biblical laws taught. It should continue to attend to the immediate needs of its local members, as the apostolic Church had done. But most other gifts to the Church and the clergy were, in the reformers' view, misdirected. Most other forms of ecclesiastical charity, particularly those surrounding pilgrimages, penance, and purgation, were, for the reformers, types of "spiritual bribery," predicated on the fabricated sacraments of penance and extreme unction and on the false teachings of purgatory and works righteousness.

In place of traditional ecclesiastical charities, the reformers instituted a series of local civil institutions of welfare, centered on the community chest, administered by the local magistrate, and directed to the local, worthy poor and needy. The community chest usually comprised the Church's endowments and other properties that had been confiscated. These community chests were eventually supplemented by local taxation and private donation. In larger cities and territories, several such community chests were established, and the poor closely monitored in the use of their services.

At minimum, this system provided food, clothing, and shelter for the poor, and emergency relief in times of war; disaster, or pestilence. In larger and wealthier communities, the community chest eventually supported the development of a more comprehensive local welfare system featuring public orphanages, workhouses, boarding schools, vocational centers, hospices, and more, administered or supervised by the local magistrate. These more generous forms of social welfare the Lutheran reformers considered to be an essential service of the Christian magistrate, the father of the community called to care for his political children. As with education, so with social welfare: the Lutheran reformers built on some two centuries of experimental civil regulation of the poor and private administration of charity in some of the stronger cities and territories of the German Empire.

CONSUMMATUM EST

Consummatum est in John 19:30 has most often been translated as “It is finished.” But there has been disagreement over this because of our uncertainty over what *finished* means and what it is that was finished.

So regarding the verb, most leave it as simply *finished* (KJV, RSV, NRSV, TEV, NIV). Others translate it as “It is accomplished” (REB) or “It is fulfilled” (NJB) or “It is done . . . complete” (E. Peterson, *The Message*, 1994). And regarding the unspecified referent, one even dares to translate the line, “Everything is done” (CEV).

Creative interpretations of this last saying of Jesus in John’s Gospel have only added to the confusion. John A. T. Robinson argues that John 19:30 is either false or at least very narrow in its scope (*The Priority of John*, 1985). This is because Jesus’ work is not complete at his death. According to John 7:39, 14:25–26, and 16:7–15, Jesus’ work includes the coming of the Spirit, which is not announced until John 20:22—well beyond Jesus’ death. But such an interpretation guts *consummatum est* of any specific meaning. Nothing of any importance is accomplished then on Golgotha.

Pulitzer Prize winner Jack Miles, in his new book *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God* (2001), says John 19:30 means God’s “cataclysmic change” undertaken in the life of Jesus to repudiate his “own past ruthlessness,” is now done. On the cross God dies to his old way of life—a life which God himself admits served nobody well. At last he becomes what he should have been all along: a God of love. But this interruption in God’s nature plays havoc with the identification of God with the Word at the creation of the world, which runs deeply throughout John’s Gospel. Miles would have God cutting off his nose to spite his face.

Into this confusion Gerhard O. Forde inserts his characteristic theological clarity (“Tetelesthai,” *LOGIA*, Epiphany 2001). He says the verb in John 19:30 means both termination and perfection. Jesus brings about perfection by ending his life. And the unspecified referent to this verb is threefold. What both ends and is completed in the crucifixion are Christ’s actual life, God’s mission in Christ, and our sinful lives.

But when Forde says we have nothing to do now except believe in God, that seems too thin. In addition to believing in God and Christ (Jn 6:29, 14:1), there are some seven other projects. We also are to be born anew (Jn 3:3), to worship God in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23), to hate ourselves (Jn 12:25), to judge others properly (Jn 7:24), to love others as Christ did (Jn 13:34, 15:12), to rejoice in Christ (Jn 16:24, 33), and to strengthen the church in faith and life (Jn 20:17). Jesus’ death negates none of these. And neither does faith include all of these so that they need no individual mention.

In addition Forde seems to minimize God’s mission. He says that when Jesus dies the “ancient foe is defeated, the power of sin is broken, death is robbed of its sting,” and through this breaking, robbing and defeating God “save sinners.”

But this description truncates what happens on Golgotha. Luther says in Jesus’ death we are set free from a much longer list of woes. We are freed from “sin, death, God’s wrath, the devil, hell, and eternal damnation” (AE 23: 404). Only Christ’s death can save us from these six horrors. He is able to do this by

enacting the blessed exchange of 2 Corinthians 5:21, whereby we get Christ’s glory and he takes on our shame. Forde does not explain why this prominent exchange-function is missing from what he values in the crucifixion.

As a result of this deficiency we are left defenseless before the wrath of God. This is terrifying because God comes after sinners like a she-bear robbed of her cubs, ripping them to pieces (Hos 13:8). Forde should have reported that John 3:36 warns us of this wrath and shows us how to escape it through Christ Jesus.

So we must quickly—in self-defense—confidently confess that it was “right for Christ to bear the punishment and wrath of God—not for his own Person, which was righteous and invisible and therefore could not become guilty, but for our person. By this fortunate exchange with us He took upon Himself our sinful person and granted us His innocent and victorious Person” (AE 26: 284). For us Christ was “stricken, smitten by God,” and through his “stripes we are healed” (Is 53:4–5). He is the lamb that goes to the slaughter rather than us. So Luther—rightly so—has Christ crying out from the cross: “*Ich trit an deine stat*,” or, “I am your substitute” (AE 22: 167).

Christ is our passover lamb (Jn 1:29, 1 Cor 5:7) who shields us from the wrath of God. Just as that first passover lamb (Ex 12:12–13) shielded the children of Israel from God’s murderous rampage, so Christ protects us now from the same horror through faith in him. Christ’s blood does not eliminate God’s wrath as Jack Miles would have it. Rather, Christ’s blood “averts” God’s wrath from us (*Sermons of Martin Luther*, Lenker edition, 8 vols., 2:378, 6:284). So we will be saved if we “fear God’s wrath on account of our sins” and yet firmly believe that God wills to save us through Christ’s intervention (SML 3: 353). Christ is like the ram caught in the thicket in Genesis 22:13 who is killed instead of Isaac (AE 4: 137, 11: 102). God still kills—but only those who have not entrusted their lives to Christ. As our lamb and ram, Christ is our substitute. He suffers in our place.

Through this substitution, Christ “appeases” the anger of God (SML 3: 268, 5: 222) by satisfying his legal demand (Col 2:14) that punishment must be suffered. Somebody has to be punished for the sins of the world and only Christ can do it. This is because “God . . . cannot avoid hating sin and sinners; and He does so by necessity, for otherwise He would be unjust and would love sin . . . Here nothing can intervene except Christ the mediator” (AE 26: 235). Only Christ can die “once for all” (Heb. 9:26) and have that sacrifice move God to mercy (AE 51: 277).

Forde fails to cover this sacrifice in his account of *consummatum est*. The most important accomplishment on the cross is this divine appeasement and satisfaction. Appeasement and satisfaction mean that the threat of God’s wrath is over—finished—for those who believe in Christ. This is what Christ was conveying in his last words on the cross (AE 27: 228). He said them because they summarized the heart of “the Christian faith.” Why else would Christ die for us “except to pay for our sins and to purchase grace for us?” (AE 52: 253). This is what we should think of when we hear Christ say, “It is finished.” It means we have been saved from the wrath of God by the blood of Christ (Rm 5:9).

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THE LCMS AND SYNCRETISM

Letter from C. F. W. Walther to Adam Ernst, August 21, 1845.
Source: Walter A. Baepfer, A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod 1847–1947 (St. Louis: CPH, 1947), 85–87; also: Ludwig Fuerbringer, Briefe von C. F. W. Walther an seine Freunde, Synodalgenossen, und Familienglieder, vol. 1 (St. Louis: CPH, 1915), 15–19.

To Pastor Adam Ernst, Marysville, Ohio.
 Saint Louis, Missouri, the 21st of August, 1845.

Dear, beloved brother in Christ, our Lord!

Your letter of August 6 filled me with heartfelt joy. After perusing it with my dear colleague Pastor Buenger, I praised God fervently that He has strengthened you in faith and permitted you to grow in love to His holy Word, His Church, and to your brethren, and that, according to your letter, He is daily opening opportunities for the reviving of the Lutheran Church in the West at this late date. Oh, how such news quickens my heart! With great joy I extend to you the hand of fellowship and as your humble colleague offer this encouragement: let us ever hold firmer to that which we have, let us remain faithful in that which has been entrusted to us. Then we shall behold the glory of God!

Much as it grieved me to hear that the errors of the synod of which you were until now a member are becoming heresies because they are retained and not corrected, it afforded me joy that you with your dear associates have testified so loyally and steadfastly. God bless you for this now and eternally! Your plan immediately to establish a new truly Lutheran synod in Ohio has my heartiest approval. I herewith implore the Lord of the Church that He would grant you, as God's architect, wisdom and loyalty to lay an immovable foundation for this new structure. No doubt, it will please you to learn that here the aversion to synodical organization is gradually waning and a sincere longing for a closer union with other true servants of the Church and their congregations is daily gaining ground. My desires concerning this matter are chiefly these:

1. That in addition to the Word of God, the synod be founded on all the Confessions of our Church, including if possible, the Saxon Articles of Visitation;
2. That a special paragraph of the constitution eliminate and exclude all syncretistic activities (*alles synkretistische Wirken*) of the members of the organization;
3. That the chief activity of the Synod be directed toward the preservation, nourishing, and supervision of the unity and purity of Lutheran doctrine;
4. That the synod exist not so much as a powerful court, but rather as an advisory body, to which a perplexed congregation may take recourse; it must particularly abstain from all encroachments upon the congregation's right to call;
5. That the lay delegates, yes, everyone who belongs to the Synod, be entitled to suffrage in the same manner as the pastors. The chairman, however, is to be elected from the latter (Acts 15:32). Finally, I think that in no matter decided by the synod should any individual be deprived

of the right to appeal to the decision and vote of all the united congregations. For the moment these are my thoughts, which I submit to your brotherly love and consideration.

God bless your deliberations with the most glorious results when you meet in Cleveland. You can be assured of our humble prayers. You have yourself anticipated that it will be impossible for me as well as my other brethren in the ministry here personally to take part in the announced conference. All the greater is our desire to have you with us after your meeting in Cleveland. I beg you that even though many obstacles are placed in your way, you do not permit yourself to be discouraged from carrying out your intention to come here with Dr. Sihler. (We most likely cannot count on the presence of dear Pastor Wyneken.) Think of the great, wholesome effects that would result from an alliance between the East and the West; how much more extensive your influence would be and how, perhaps, also our humble efforts could strengthen you spiritually. May the love of Christ to His bride and to us in the barren West tear asunder all bands woven by the devil which would restrain you from looking us up soon. . . .

AN IMMENSE RESPONSE

In a written response that came in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks launched against our nation on September 11, one of the schools that trains the pastors of our church body, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, wrote: *The suffering and human need that resulted from the . . . attacks was immense and our response must be immense as well.*

I think you will agree that our Synod's response has been immense. But not always in the way we might hope. Sadly, for our Synod one of the responses to September 11 has been an immense controversy. It's been so big that Paul Harvey even mentioned it in passing on one of his daily news briefs. It was also mentioned in the *Waco Tribune Herald*, which is where many of you were first made aware of this controversy. Perhaps since then, you have forgotten about it, hoping it would blow over and go away. It hasn't.

The controversy I am talking about has to do with a prayer that was offered up by one the District Presidents in our Synod at Yankee Stadium last year in September following the terrorist attacks. It was a televised prayer service in which prayers were offered up not only by Christians, but also by Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and others. In the time following that event, many in the LCMS have expressed concern that by taking part in such a service, the impression was given that all religions are equal or that really, when it comes right down to it, all who pray are praying to the same god.

It seems to me that this controversy has raised at least two important questions. The first is this: Do the experiences that we Christians share with other people in the world provide us with opportunities to witness about Jesus? By taking part in that worship service, President Benke undoubtedly believed that the experience that all New Yorkers and all Americans

shared was one that provided an opportunity for him to give a witness to God's love. Was he right?

The other question is, when we do take up the godly task of sharing God's love with others, what sort of obligation or responsibility does Christ and His Word place upon us? This morning our text from Acts 17, which talks about St. Paul's visit to the city of Athens, helps us address these questions. Although it was not a part of our reading, I want you to hear what vs. 16 says: "While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols."

As Paul walked through the city of Athens he was distressed to see how many false gods were worshiped in that city. In the village in Ghana, West Africa, where my parents worked when I was about 8 years old, no more than twenty feet from our back yard was an altar built to a village idol. It was possible for me to watch sacrifices and other pagan rites take place there. It was one of many such sites in our village. That is the sort of thing Paul saw all around him in Athens.

One reason why people create idols is that they have real needs that they know cannot be handled alone; they need divine help. Who knows what needs Paul saw being expressed at the idol altars. Perhaps he saw a weeping mother, whose child lay sick, offering prayers and sacrifices; perhaps he saw a man crippled and injured by some disaster praying to his god; maybe he saw a man worried about his business asking for a blessing. Whatever needs were expressed at the altars in Athens, they were no different from our own needs and concerns today; they were no different from those expressed by people affected by terrorist attacks.

What distressed Paul was that although the people's needs were real, the gods they prayed to were not! Their gods were false gods that could do nothing to help. Worse, unless they turned from their idols to the true God, the people Paul saw worshipping would be eternally doomed. Would you care? Paul did. He was greatly distressed.

Our text today records Paul's response to these worshippers of false gods. He starts off by saying, "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious." He reminds them they are so religious that they have even got an altar in town dedicated to a god called "The Unknown God." He then assures them that he is going to tell them about the God they do not know. That is instructive. It is not pride for Christians to say that we know who the true God is and that all who worship other gods do not know. It is the truth and it is necessary. It is necessary, not just for the sake of our own faithful confession of the truth, but also for our neighbors' eternal salvation.

Having given his introduction, Paul then begins to build on an experience that he and his hearers all share. Do the experiences we Christians have in common with non-Christians provide opportunities for a faithful and godly witness about Jesus? Sure they do! Paul speaks in Athens of the experience all people share of living in a world created by God. "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live."

To talk about God as the Creator of everything is to remind people that God has left a witness to Himself in everything He has made. Ps. 19:1 says: "the skies proclaim the work of [God's] hands." Paul writes in Rom. 1:20: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

Could it be true that there is no excuse for not knowing the true God? That's what God's Word says. What if you do not have the Bible? No excuse. The witness God has left to Himself in all creation, creating all nations, assigning the times and places of every people, is enough that people should have sought God out. As he speaks of God's creating people and placing them in the world, Paul says in vs. 27: "God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us."

God's human creatures have an obligation to seek the true God Who made them. At the very least, Paul is saying, even if they have to grope around like people trying to find their way in the dark, they have an obligation to look for the true God. In fact, as he says in Romans, we are without excuse when we do not. But instead of seeking the true God, the Athenians had created false gods. In the darkness of their sin, they produced false lights.

You have heard before that there are two kinds of light you might see in a tunnel. One is the true light of day at the end of the tunnel that gives hope. The other is the headlamp of an oncoming train. To confuse the two is deadly. For those who worshiped at the altars of Athens, destruction lay just around the bend. And Paul tells them so.

Paul tells them in vs. 30, "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent." Now we see why Paul has been building on the common experience that all people share as creatures of the One God. His purpose all along has been to provide an opportunity to call the Athenians to repentance. And so the Apostle says in vs. 31 that God "has set a day when he will judge the world."

On that day when all people face their Creator and Judge, ignorance will not be an excuse. God patiently provides time in this life for repentance, time to seek Him. In that sense ignorance of the true God is overlooked for a time, but not forever. In fact, already, whenever Christ is preached, the time for repentance is "now," at that very moment.

Do we dare to preach to our world like Paul? Do we dare to let the experiences we have in common with others, even terrorist attacks, become opportunities to call on those who pray to false gods to turn from their sinful ignorance to faith in the one true God? If we do not, when will they hear of God's salvation in Christ? If the moment of their deepest need and greatest weakness is not the time to be forceful and clear in proclaiming the Truth of God, what time is?

I asked earlier, "When we are sharing the love of Christ with others, what obligation does Christ's word place upon us?" Well, in the first place we are under obligation to call unbelievers to repentance. And this is so because only then can we truly share God's saving love in Christ, which is our greatest obligation.

This was Paul's practice wherever he went. It is what he did in Athens. Having spoken of the day set for judgment, Paul goes

on in the same verse to proclaim that this Judge is none other than the one whom God raised from dead. He is the one whom we know as Christ Jesus, who died for our sins, that all who look to Him in faith might be judged forgiven and righteous.

This is the Savior whose blood removes from God's sight the stain of humanity's sinful and self-imposed ignorance of the true God! For all who in sinful ignorance are even now guilty of offering prayers to false gods like Buddha or the Allah of Islam, or who put their trust in military strength or money or political correctness or political alliances, for all, Christ died. And for all our witness must be clear, because only in Christ can the darkness of unbelief give way to the light of faith.

This is the opportunity that was lost last September at Yankee Stadium, when a field of dreams became a house of prayer to all the dark gods of this world, and when, to our great shame, the name of Jesus was only mentioned as if He, the Lord of all, were just one of many other possible gods. Acts 4:12 says, "*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*" Yes, Jesus' name was mentioned in prayer. But it was not clearly proclaimed to the lost and doomed as the only name by which we must be saved.

What would have resulted if the message of repentance and salvation in Christ alone would have been spoken boldly, if the false gods of Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, would have been named as false? No doubt the umpires of political correctness would have cried, "Foul ball!" As happened with most who heard Paul preach in Athens, the message would have been rejected; people would have scoffed, Acts 17:32. But read on to vs. 34 where it says that some "*joined [Paul] and believed*" (NASV).

The suffering and need that come from living in a fallen and sinful world are immense. All who witnessed the tragedy of September 11 are convinced of that. God grant that we will also be convinced that our response, too, must be immense. It must be bigger than anything that man can do. It must be bigger than us and our fears that our message will be rejected. It must be big enough to confront the sin of the world, and big enough to overcome it. And in Christ it is, because Christ is God's response to sin.

That means, of course, that Jesus also is God's response to our own sins of ignorance about Him and His Truth. As we repent of these, as well as of our sins of fear and weakness that keep us from being clear about Christ to others, we receive the peace of sins forgiven, and in that peace we are strengthened for faithful witness to Him.

Jim Price
Waco, TX

PASTOR AND PEOPLE

For a ten-year period, from 1920–1930, Theodore Graebner received questions from young pastors "in the field." These men wanted counsel and guidance on particular matters. Dr. Graebner replied with the practical application of Scripture, and in doing so, did not offer anything new. Doctrinally his letters represent the stand of our Lutheran Confessions and the practice of the church.

In 1932 Concordia Publishing House published 112 of these letters in a book titled, Pastor and People: Letters to a Young Preacher.

Community Christmas

[Query] Is it unionistic practice for one of our Lutheran churches to take part in a community Christmas-tree program together with the other churches of that city? One pastor informs me that only the old-time Christmas carols such as "Silent Night," are to be sung at the occasion. He adds that no prayer is to be spoken, with the exception of the Lord's Prayer if requested. The press announcement reads: "All the churches of the town, Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist, Christian, Baptist, and Presbyterian, are participating."

[Reply] Participation in any community Christmas service should be avoided by our pastors and congregations. Either the festival is stripped of religious significance, and then the celebration is surely an abomination to our Lord—it is the kind in which Herod and the Jewish elders could have joined—or it is a religious celebration with hymns, prayers, etc., and participation then is certainly unionistic.

The offense which is given consists in a false appearance of spiritual union. Unless we accept the principle that joint prayer and worship are conditioned upon unity of religious belief, we have no longer a compass to steer by. We have then lost every claim upon our membership except that of "loyalty" or tradition—a very poor claim, as the Lutheran Church found out in 1820, when it was about dead. The thing must work utter confusion in the minds of the common people whose minds are logical enough to ask the question, If on Christmas night, then why not on Christmas Day or any Sunday?

The Intolerance of the Gospel

Paul's letters to the Galatians and to the Romans were written for the preservation of liberty; for in one of them he says: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free"; and yet, for the very purpose of maintaining that liberty, he hurled his anathemas at the Judaizers' heads. Let us not forget that the Gospel has its intolerance as well as its toleration. There must be no toleration of treason to the Cross; for the toleration of such treason is always treachery. I say not indeed that all such errors should be put down by force—God forbid!—but I do say that they should be denounced by every loyal servant of the Lord and that the Church should absolve itself from all complicity with the errorists. And though there are many who would cry out against such a course as bigoted, I would rather, even in the interests of freedom itself, have—if you choose to call it so—the bigotry of Paul than the indifference of him who counts nothing essential and who is everything by turns and nothing long.

A Soldiers' Memorial Service

[Query] A Soldiers' Memorial Service has been arranged to which all the churches and all the clergy of the city are invited. This puts me and our little mission into a predicament. To join in a union service in one of the local churches is contrary to our principles. On the other hand, to remain away from the memor-

ial service would throw a bad light on us and during this time of war would cause others to doubt my people's patriotism. Now, in case this service should be conducted in the city park, would it be acting contrary to Lutheran principles if I accepted the invitation to preach in case I had the order of service all to myself?

[Reply] When such things as a public memorial service are brewing, it is best for us to go right to the head of the procession and lead them on. We are at a disadvantage if we make our declaration of principles only as a last resort. It is best to wait on the authorities as soon as such public demonstrations are proposed, offer our help as citizens, and keep it on the civic plane throughout. If the thing must be religious after all, a statement of principles would be in order. If you have shown the proper interest in the first place, you will have little trouble in taking over the entire service. I see no reason why in that event you should not conduct this memorial program in the city park.

The Lodge and Christianity

If Christianity demands of its adherents that they worship the true God alone and that they profess no religion which denies, by direct implication, that Jesus is the only Savior and that man cannot save himself by good conduct, then it must demand that those who regard themselves as followers of Jesus Christ separate themselves from those who hold contrary religious views. The simple fact that in the lodge men of all religions worship together is sufficient to establish its non-Christian character. I do not agree with the argument which charges every lodge with being "idolatrous." That accusation holds good regarding the Masons, Odd-Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Eastern Star, and a number of others. These are plainly deistic, involving the worship of a Supreme Being which is not the God of the Bible, but "the God who reveals Himself to all men in nature."

Explicitly the name of Christ is excluded from all prayers and from the Scripture quoted. With this is joined the notion that natural man can acknowledge God as his Father. In these lodges a figment of the human brain called Great Spirit or Architect of the Universe is worshiped. But in most lodges there is not what one can designate as idolatrous worship, but a unionistic or syncretistic worship of God. God is worshiped, but not in a manner in which He desires. In fact, these people worship Him in a manner which He has distinctly forbidden when He told us to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

In dealing with members of such orders, we draw their attention to the fact that they are praying jointly with those who belong to no church, have no knowledge of the Gospel, do not repent over sin, and do not use the means of grace, with these and with Jews and outspoken agnostics. Such worship is an insult to God, and Christians can have no part in it. With this line of argument you can reach the conscience of Christians enmeshed in these minor lodges and prove to them the inconsistency of their conduct. To participate in religious ceremonies with those who either do not worship the true God at all or worship Him in a manner He has forbidden and to expect salvation as the reward of a virtuous life, these things do not agree with elementary Christianity.

PAEDOLOGIA

Toward the end of the Saxon Visitation Articles, Philip Melancthon describes—at Luther's behest—the outlines for school curricula. One of the resources commended therein is the Paedologia of Petrus Mosellanus.

In the preface to his 1927 translation of the Paedologia, Robert Seybolt writes, "In a general sense, the sixteenth [century] was the greatest century of the Renaissance. It was also the great century of the school-dialogue," by which students learned proper Latin instead of a colloquial language which has been described as "a barbarous tongue characterized by incorrect syntax and sordida verba."

Published in Leipzig on the feast of St. Matthew, 1518—just a short time after Luther's nailing of the 95 Theses—the Paedologia not only give us a window through which we can see the teaching of Latin grammar and syntax, but also gain a view of school life during the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-centuries. Apart from certain particulars, we may find that the conversations, desires, opinions and [mis]understandings of people in general have not changed all that much.

Taken from Renaissance Student Life: the Paidologia of Petrus Mosellanus translated from the Latin by Robert Francis Seybolt (University of Illinois Press, 1927).

Dialogue x: Stephanus and Laurentius Forms for Speaking of a Feast Day

STEPHANUS. Who do they say is going to preach to the people in our church today, Larry?

LAURENTIUS. I hear that one of the monks is to appear in the pulpit.

STEPHANUS. I wonder that no outstanding preacher has been brought here for this occasion, since a great mob of people is crowding into the church today, because a certain celebrant, who has lately received priestly orders, will officiate for the first time.

LAURENTIUS. It seems strange to me, too, although as far as I am concerned, I should wish the sermon to be as short as possible. For I am terribly hungry, having been fasting now for two days. In these days, when we abstain from meat, I never leave the table fully satisfied.

STEPHANUS. Your longing for food must be checked for two hours more, for in addition to the high mass which takes an hour, you know how much time the choir takes, which even our songs, prolix beyond measure, hardly exceed in length.

LAURENTIUS. A curse on those who invented these things for us! For myself, as soon as the ceremony is over, I shall go speedily to the doors of the rich so that, if not among the first, I shall at least be among the second or third to receive a handout.

STEPHANUS. But you'll hardly get there before I do.

LAURENTIUS. The consequences will prove that.

Dialogue xi: Clemens and Remigius They Discuss the Second Day after the Feast, Which Is Tuesday

CLEMENS. Woe to us, Remigius! We have slept beyond the limit. Even now the sun shines brightly everywhere, so that one may

guess that the signal for the seventh hour has been given.

REMIGIUS. No, I think the sky is merely clearer than usual, although I have often paid penalties on this day for my sleepiness.

CLEMENS. However that may be, I am afraid of the rod for myself; so, I'll think over another excuse by which I may be able to escape from my studies today.

REMIGIUS. What one?

CLEMENS. You know, don't you, what our landlady asked of us yesterday?

REMIGIUS. Yes, to help her servants draw water. But what about it?

CLEMENS. This loop-hole will be large enough to slip through; for which reason it will be up to you, when the stroke of eight is heard, to come into school as if from the midst of your labors, and urgently request, from the preceptors, permission to go out, the reason being the one that I have suggested.

REMIGIUS. Since this is the day on which a magnificent funeral is to be conducted, and a sacrifice made to the shades of the dead, I fear that our scheme will hardly be successful; and anyhow there are a few here already getting the procession ready.

CLEMENS. However the thing turns out, it must be attempted. I don't know why on this day it is always so hard to go to school, not less so than if I had to go back into some drudgery. I believe that a sense of leisure remaining from yesterday makes me so reluctant.

*Dialogue xxxiv: Raphael and Servatius
They Talk about the Feast of St. Urban*

RAPHAEL. Would that I were permitted to have wings, to fly away home from here! For, I greatly desire to spend tomorrow at home. I should not refuse to purchase that ability at a high price.

SERVATIUS. What does this mean? Do you desire, by divesting yourself of your human character, to degenerate into a speechless bird? What has happened recently that demands such a sudden flight of you?

RAPHAEL. Do you ask? Don't you know that tomorrow the feast of St. Urban will be celebrated?

SERVATIUS. I know it, but what of it?

RAPHAEL. Among us they worship this saint with almost the same customs and ceremonies with which formerly the pagans worshiped Bacchus, so that what were Bacchanalia with them, with us are almost Urbanalia.

SERVATIUS. But for what purpose do Christians do these things?

RAPHAEL. They think that when the saint is thus propitiated, grapes grow more abundantly.

SERVATIUS. O stupid men, who think themselves deserving of the favor of the saints by drinking-bouts and intoxication, when they may please God the ruler by abstinence and sobriety!

BONHOEFFER'S VISION STATEMENT

Many bureaucrats in the LCMS today commend vision and mission statements. Their claims ought to be tempered in light of what Dietrich Bonhoeffer has written as found in Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Faith in Community, translated by John Doberstein (New York: Harper and Row, 1954).

God hates visionary dreaming; it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. The man who fashions a visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others, and by himself. He enters the community of Christians with his demands, sets up his own law, and judges the brethren and God Himself accordingly. He stands adamant, a living reproach to all others in the circle of brethren. He acts as if he is the creator of the Christian community, as if his dream binds men together. When things do not go his way, he calls the effort a failure. When his ideal picture is destroyed, he sees the community going to smash. So he becomes, first an accuser of his brethren, then an accuser of God, and finally the despairing accuser of himself.

In the paragraphs immediately preceding this, Bonhoeffer writes:

Innumerable times, a whole Christian community has broken down because it had sprung from a wish dream. The serious Christian, set down for the first time in a Christian community, is likely to bring with him a very definite idea of what Christian life together should be and to try to realize it. But God's grace speedily shatters such dreams. Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves.

By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world. He does not abandon us to those rapturous experiences and lofty moods that come over us like a dream. God is not a God of the emotions but the God of truth. Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God's sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it. The sooner this shock of disillusionment comes to an individual and to a community the better for both. A community which cannot bear and cannot survive such a crisis, which insists upon keeping its illusion when it should be shattered, permanently loses in that moment the promise of Christian community. Sooner or later it will collapse. Every human wish dream that is injected into the Christian community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be banished if genuine community is to survive. He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial.

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