LOGIA

A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

After Postmodernism

EPIPHANY 2004 VOLUME XIII, NUMBER 1

εἴ 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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THE COVER ART: It has been said that great turning points in history occur concurrently with the destruction of buildings. *Postmodernism* entered twentieth century vocabulary through the language of architecture, and following September 11, 2001, the Zeitgeist in the realms of the sacred and profane.

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FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

AC [CA]	Augsburg Confession
AE	*Luther's Works,* American Edition
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
Ep	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
FC	Formula of Concord
LC	Large Catechism
LW	*Lutheran Worship*
SA	Smalcald Articles
SBH	*Service Book and Hymnal*
SC	Small Catechism
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
SL	St. Louis Edition of Luther's Works
Tappert	*The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.* Trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert
Triglotta	*Concordia Triglotta*
TLH	*The Lutheran Hymnal*
Tr	Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
WA	*Luthers Werke,* Weimarer Ausgabe [Weimar Edition]
Kolb-Wengert	Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

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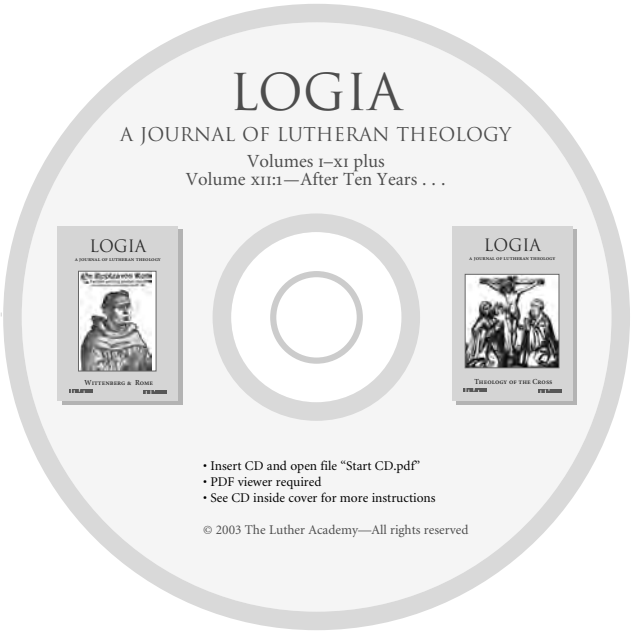

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Correspondence

To the editors:

In my opinion, Robert Mayes's article on liturgy and syncretism in the light of Exodus 32 (*Logia* XII, no. 3) is hardly convincing as it paints with strokes far too broad and fails to define the issues clearly. According to Mayes, division in the Lutheran Church today over worship is represented by one side which "favors the use of 'contemporary,' soft-rock music for worship" and another that "prefers classical hymnody and traditional instruments . . . ." In defining the issue this way, Mayes places the debate in the subjective realm of musical taste and aesthetics instead of in the realm of theology, defined by the word of God and the church's confession of it. Suffice it to say that I do not fully agree with Mayes' assessment of contemporary Christian music as it relates to culture. Nor can I accept the assertion that there exist such things as "traditional" instruments for worship which somehow are not subject to the cultural influences that Mayes regards as necessarily idolatrous. Mayes asserts that it is idolatrous if music itself is seen as a vehicle that can assist the word of God due to the inherent power of music on the human psyche. Contrast this with the view of Martin Luther, who praised God for music precisely because it contained such power, which can be used to serve the word of God. Also with J. S. Bach, whose church music is so glorious precisely because it serves the word of God with tremendous emotional as well as intellectual power.

In my view, too many representatives of both sides of the liturgical division within the LCMS (and probably other Lutheran churches as well) misconstrue the issues as they are taught in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Some defenders of "contemporary" services fail to discriminate theologically, and therefore the worship books and other resources they use contain plenty of theology originating from the generic American Evangelicalism that supplies so much of this music and these texts, which no true Lutheran service should utilize. In other words, it is not true in many cases that true theology is preserved even while the musical form is changed.

On the other hand, some defenders of "historic liturgy" and ("classical?") hymnody appear to have adopted the Roman definition of catholicity, namely, that the liturgy of the church should not change and should be everywhere the same, a teaching which is specifically rejected in AC VII ("It is not necessary that human traditions or rites and ceremonies, instituted by men, should be alike everywhere"). Even when—at the insistence of and under the governance of temporal rulers but also with the guidance of theologians—Lutheran churches adopted fixed orders and thus circumscribed this evangelical liberty, there remained regional variety and plenty of change over time.

In the Synodical Conference, *TLH* drew upon a broad body of English liturgical texts and hymns, much of it originating (as one would expect, given the language) from Reformed and Anglican contexts. I believe that hymnal succeeded in its attempt to provide our churches with worship materials that were accessible to the people and thus edifying, while rigorously sifting out non-Lutheran theology, sometimes even by the omission of individual verses of hymns that were otherwise retained. *LW*, developed hastily after the *LBW* debacle, was not so successful, largely because it was created by musicians for musicians and so many congregations found much of it difficult to sing. It remains to be seen whether the "2007 hymnal," whatever its name will be, will succeed in providing our Lutheran congregations with theologically pure liturgical and hymn resources which at the same time will be beloved by the people who sing them. Given the low level of music education in our culture today, I think the attempt will fail if all so-called "contemporary" forms (that is, new forms of music that people of the congregation like to sing) are rejected out of hand as "idolatrous," as Mayes would have us do.

What Luther and the Reformation he led rejected as idolatrous was the historic liturgy of the medieval church (the Latin Mass with its canon) and the proliferation of "human traditions." While in many ways Lutheran liturgical reform in the sixteenth century can be viewed as conservative, retaining as much as possible from that handed down in the papal church, for Luther this was because the people knew these forms and thus he believed they should not be taken away from the people arbitrarily. For Luther, the key issues of liturgical reform were (1) that the gospel be proclaimed clearly and purely; (2) that evangelical liberty be preserved over against human traditions that obscure the gospel not only by false theology but also (and more often) by simple additions and the teaching that such traditions are required for true worship; (3) that the people be edified rather than required to worship according to

human traditions that do not edify them. This third principle is the reason that Lutheran liturgies have changed with time. Pastors and liturgical reformers today will do well to remember the second and third of these principles as well as the first.

John A. Maxfield
Director, Luther Academy

To the editors:

Two brief corrections should be made to the article "A Tale of Two Synods," in *Logia,* Eastertide 2003:

1. The first full paragraph, second column, page 24, contains a slight error in detail. The corrected paragraph should read as follows:

> Two challenges to the traditional understanding of Romans 16:17 arose in the 1950s. The first involved the phrase *who cause divisions and offences.* Traditionally the phrase *contrary to the doctrine* was understood as an adjectival phrase, modifying the nouns *divisions and offenses.* Thus the passage censured those who were causing divisions and offences by changing the doctrine they had been taught; Wisconsin and conservative Missourians applied this passage to Missourians who modified teachings and practices regarding Scouting, the military chaplaincy, and, by the 1950s, fellowship itself. Some charged that *contrary to the doctrine* should be understood as an adverbial phrase, modifying the verb *who cause*, which suggested that the passage instead censured "those who, contrary to the teaching you have learned, are creating divisions and offenses." Thus not the teachings but "the actions of these men [were] in direct contradiction to the teaching which the Romans had learned." "Moderate" Missourians found this interpretation convenient grounds for charging conservative Missourians and Wisconsinites that they were the ones violating the passage by acting in such a negative, contentious manner.

2. Regarding page 23, first full paragraph, right hand column: upon further investigation of his entire book, I note that there are additional locations in which Prof. Brug does indicate that it is appropriate to recognize and practice fellowship privately with weak brothers who belong to other Christian denominations. He discusses the administration of Holy Communion to non-WELS and non-ELS members in both public and private settings (pp. 118–20), conducting funerals of those not in fellowship (pp. 124–125), and participation of non-WELS and non-ELS members in aspects of corporate worship (pp. 127–133). In his remarks it is clear that there can be weak brothers and sisters in heterodox churches, and fellowship may be practiced with them. Regarding private relationships, Prof. Brug says that "we may consider not only the public confession they make through their church membership, but also their private, personal confession" (p. 147–148).

In a recent article in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Prof. Brug also discusses under what circumstances WELS members would be encouraged to practice church fellowship with weak Christians of other denominations: "Can There Ever Be Exceptions to Our Regular Fellowship Practices That Do Not Violate Scripture's Fellowship Principles?" *WLQ* 99 (Summer 2002): 163–181; (Fall 2002): 243–258.

There was never a disagreement between Prof. Brug and myself regarding the scriptural principles of church fellowship or their general application.

Mark Braun
Milwaukee, WI

To the editors:

In the expectation that Pastor Prange's important and valuable article on the Wauwatosa Gospel (*Logia,* Eastertide 2003) will spark animated, wideranging, and perhaps prolonged discussion, I will endeavor to keep these remarks brief.

1. How do the comments on the bottom of the left column on page 37 square with the fact that Pieper's 1911 article did indeed already virtually equate synodical suspension with excommunication?

2. The distinction between the two is fundamental. If suspension becomes excommunication, then no one can be removed from a fellowship for any false doctrine whatsoever without a declaration that he is an unbeliever. If excommunication becomes suspension, then what has become of the use of the Keys? The Wisconsin position on Church and Ministry, though generally correct, was thus seriously marred by Pieper's position. One wonders why it was not explicitly and decisively repudiated. The situation with the Protestants in the late 1920s provided an acid test (though none should have been needed). Yet even then Pieper held fast to his position.

On the one hand, a couple of individuals, kindly responding to an inquiry of mine, have suggested that the WELS has tacitly abandoned Pieper's equation. On the other hand, in his foreword to Immanuel Frey's 1928 paper on the history of the suspensions in the West Wisconsin District (WELS *Historical Institute Journal*, October 2002, 202), Pastor Prange writes (p. 27):

> But again, Frey brought his conference to this important question: Are we really ready to say that these Protestants, who had formerly been our brothers, are no longer Christians? That question has never been unequivocally answered by the Wisconsin Synod, not even by the Western Wisconsin District in 1962 with the lifting of the suspensions. And it probably never will be.

What an amazing admission: We did not know then, we do not know now, and we probably never will know whether or not we declared the Protestants, a sizable group at that time, to be unbelievers. It scarcely seems possible.

3. But just as Pieper's position was a foreign element that could only discredit the Wauwatosa Gospel, so there may be, I suggest, a relatively unknown feature of the Wauwatosa Gospel that can only elicit our admiration.

From what I have seen (and I would love to see a thorough study of this), incautious utterances of Luther regarding self-excommunication (explicable, perhaps, as arising from the absence in his time of congregational administration of church discipline?) were utilized by Walther in his pastoral theology, since he had the erroneous idea that someone who did not meet with the congregation when it came to the final step of Matthew 18 could not be excommunicated. Instead of being recognized as a theological fiction, self-excommunication received endorsement from other theologians (including Carl Manthey-Zorn), and eventually became embedded in some congregational constitutions, thus undermining proper use of the Keys and the salvation of souls. But the nonsense of it all was lucidly exposed by John Schaller on page 107 of his 1913 pastoral theology.

Do we possibly have here one rather unheralded fruit of the Wauwatosa Gospel?

In conclusion, I heartily salute the author for writing, and *Logia* for publishing, the splendid article on the Wauwatosa Gospel. May it be widely studied.

R. E. Wehrwein
Reformation Lutheran Conference
New Ulm, MN

To the editors:

I was drawn into Peter Prange's article on the Wauwatosa Gospel (Eastertide 2003) by the strong foundation of J. P. Koehler. His call to return to the Scriptures and not simply to regurgitate the formulations of the fathers, no matter how orthodox they be, was certainly refreshing. It is also a necessary admonition for our own times. However, as the article progressed, I became more and more alarmed at the unbiblical assertions that were made by the very same Wauwatosa theologians. This led me to apply Koehler's *ad fontes* rule to the writings of August Pieper, John Shaller and J. P. Koehler, to read firsthand what they had to say concerning Christ's institution of the office of the holy ministry and of the blessed sacraments.

In his article entitled "Are There Legal Regulations in the New Testament?" August Pieper takes up the question as to whether Christ's institution of baptism, eucharist, and preaching are "legal regulations." Here he gives a veritable clinic on how to employ the straw-man argument. By inventing distinctions with no difference and ill-defined definitions he is able to answer his own question with a resounding "NO!" Bravo to Mr. Pieper.

But now the real questions begin. Does Jesus care one way or the other whether we perform these divinely instituted ceremonies according to His institution or whether we simply do whatever the Spirit (spirit?) leads us to do? Would a pastor, for instance, be guilty of profaning the word of God if He used lamb chops instead of bread in the Lord's Supper? Or would he not since these are, after all, only "Evangelical Arrangements"? Furthermore, since it has now become an "Evangelical Arrangement" to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, is the first Legal Regulation (You shall have no other gods) no longer binding on the Christian? Such nonsensical questions result from a confusion of law and gospel.

Martin Luther knew that the proper distinction between law and gospel was not a result of a hair-splitting categorization of the various statutes, customs, precepts and ordinances of God. It was rather to be found in the living voice of the gospel which condemned men for not believing in Jesus and then absolved them for Jesus' sake.

Unlike Rev. Prange, I do not lament the fact that Wauwatosa theology did not take the Synodical Conference by storm. The several years that it did pelt us left enough stinging after-effects as it is.

Jonathan Lange
Evanston, Wyoming

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."

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What Comes After Postmodernism?

Frederic W. Baue

Postmodernism is on the lips of many in the church today. One hears it referred to from the pulpit and sees it mentioned in print, usually in the pejorative sense. To most, postmodernism is a cultural trend or general outlook in which there is no such thing as absolute truth; truth is relative, or worse yet, all truth claims are equally valid, no matter how contradictory, and an individual may adhere to contradictory truth claims. For example, a Roman Catholic will condone abortion, a Fundamentalist will accept the canons of Higher Criticism, or a Lutheran will accept certain tenets of New Age philosophy, such as reincarnation. To churchmen this is poison. For the end result of such mixing of beliefs is a dilution of the gospel that endangers men's souls.

Dr. Gene Edward Veith has traced the outlines of this movement in his *Postmodern Times*. In this excellent work he shows how postmodernism began as an intellectual movement among French literary critics in the 1960s, found its way to America in the '70s, and went on to find acceptance among the general public in the aftermath of the cultural upheavals of the last half of the last century.

The question remains, however: If Postmodernism comes after Modernism, what comes after Postmodernism? If Post-modernism is a cultural trend among us today, and cultural trends come and go, what comes next? Post-Postmodernism? Neo-Postmodernism? Gnesio-Postmodernism? I address this problem in my own book, *The Spiritual Society*. There I draw on Christian theology and the work of Harvard sociologist P. A. Sorokin to argue that the current Postmodern cultural trend, secular and pessimistic, is beginning to resolve into its opposite, a spiritual and optimistic culture, but one that will be hostile to orthodox Christianity.

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

The poet David would have had sympathy for us. He, too, lived in a critical period, a time of turmoil and uncertainty, a time of transition between two contending cultural forces. The culture of Saul, with its compromising sympathy for Canaanite religion, was waning, while the culture of David, with its pure strain of Hebrew discipleship, was gathering strength. Among those who came to David at Hebron were "men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do" (1 Chronicles 12:32). The situation was critical. Saul's regime, so accommodating to established cultural influences, had fallen. David, long ago anointed king, was now ready to come into his kingdom. He needed leadership. He needed men who could read the signs of the times, give sound advice, and ascertain the wisest course of action. David got the direction he needed and ascended to the throne of Israel. We need men and women like that now, sanctified thinkers and artists who can discern cultural trends in the world and help the church formulate an appropriate response today.

EVANGELISM

Key to an understanding of history must be an awareness of the centrality of evangelism. Our Lord indicated as much when he said, "Upon this rock [the confession that Jesus is the Christ] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18 KJV). The proclamation of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ is the responsibility of the church and will be accomplished with the help of the Lord of the church. Beginning at Jerusalem, then spreading to Judea and Samaria, and from there to the ends of the earth, the church will carry this message of salvation to all people.

The devil will oppose this work of God; it is an invasion of his miserable kingdom of darkness. He will foment persecution from without and heresy from within. But he will not prevail. He will walk about like a roaring lion, devour some, draw many away from the faith, and impede the progress of the gospel. But he will not succeed. Jesus promised that he himself would build his church.

How shall this be accomplished, given the weakness and frailty of all-too-human disciples? Herein lies a mystery, yet one more paradox in a church where the last are first: weakness overcomes power. As Jesus prepared for his passion he said, "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out" (John 12:31). In the weakness of his death he destroyed sin, death, and the power of the devil. This action is described symbolically in the last book of the Bible: "He [Christ] seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:2). In other words, the Lord limited the power of Satan to deceive the nations so that the gospel could be proclaimed all over the world for a long period of time. That is the simplest explanation of this verse. It should be obvious that if the devil had his way, the gospel would be preached nowhere; there would be no church, no pastors, no faith, no sacra-

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ments. But the impossible has happened. Christian people—all their faults notwithstanding—have in fact spread the saving gospel of Jesus Christ all over the world.

Wherever the gospel has been preached, people have responded to its message of salvation and congregations have been formed. With the growth of the church, cities have been transformed by her influence, by the cumulative influence of individual Christian men and women involved in secular affairs. City by city, nations and civilizations have likewise been transformed. As the Roman senate filled up with Christian leaders, it passed laws against abortion and infanticide.

Something like this seems to be the point of Jesus' parable about the mustard seed. The kingdom of God "is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches" (Luke 13:19). Conservative interpreters read this as follows: the tree is the kingdom of God. It starts small and becomes large. The birds come and go; they are people of the world not attached to the kingdom directly. The branches are the fringe benefits of the church to a nation that allows it to flourish. Included are those secondary institutions created by or influenced by the church, such as the arts, education, law, government, business, medicine, and so forth. These ultimately provide benefits even to people who do not belong to the church. Millions today benefit from a university education, little realizing that the institution was invented by the church.

Conversely, civilizations that reject the gospel suffer practical consequences. It comes as a shock (but ultimately no surprise) that the U.S. Senate, where Christian influence has long been in eclipse, should refuse to pass laws against abortion and infanticide that have been handed up to it by the House of Representatives. Thus the lives of the unborn and newborn remain unprotected in America, and the first unalienable right is set aside in favor of "choice."

As the gospel influences the world, the decay of a civilization likewise impedes the progress of the gospel.

For these reasons I maintain that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the key to history. Western civilization is largely a by-product of the gospel. Its rise and its fall are intensely interesting to us, for it is *our* civilization, and our immediate livelihood and well-being depend upon its stability. Of course what is of ultimate importance is the kingdom of God, that is, the church, that divine institution that is in the world but not of the world, through which God calls people to repentance and saves them for everlasting life.

But as the gospel influences the world, the decay of a civilization likewise impedes the progress of the gospel. Someone once compared history to the scaffolding around Noah's ark. With such a bewildering profusion of boards and ladders you can hardly make out what is being built behind it. This is how we often look at institutions of society such as government, education, law, economics; they are the temporal structures which surround and support the church. We see it all and sometimes the scaffolding seems more solid and impressive than the construction project itself with all of its delays, cost overruns, staff shortages, and mistakes that have to be corrected. Yet the work goes on from generation to generation, and one Noah after another arises to be a preacher of righteousness, to proclaim the gospel by which the ship is built. One by one and two by two, people are gathered in and find sanctuary. Finally the rain comes down, the streams rise, the winds blow and beat against the scaffolding, and it washes away while the ark of salvation, the church of Jesus Christ, floats away on the waters to a new world of everlasting bliss. For the first world, it was the *eschaton*, the end of all things. And so will it be for us in our world.

EXPECTATION

What this sets up in the minds of believers is an expectation of Christ's return. Our minds on things above, we look to the sky in hope. From heaven our salvation draws near. Not just mine. Ours. All of us in the church on earth, together with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, cry out, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus!" This glorious appearing of Jesus Christ will bring an end to human history. All of its pomp and vainglory, all of its power and riches—all will be overthrown in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. The last will be first and the first, last. The divine comedy will play out its final scene and the curtain will come down upon human events, to the great laughter and applause of the saints, whose groans and cries of anguish have gone up like fragrant incense to the throne of God throughout the whole long struggle of the age of grace.

Churchmen of every age have expected to see the fulfillment of the eschatological hope within their lifetimes. St. Paul thought so. St. Augustine thought so. Luther thought so. And with some justification, even though they were mistaken. In every age, the dynamics of the end times have always been present. The gospel has been preached. The church has been under the cross. There have been signs in the heavens and upon the earth, eclipses and comets, floods and famines, wars and rumors of wars. We look at our own age and say, "Surely these are the last of the last days." Like our illustrious predecessors, we may be wrong. But what is certain is that one day, one generation will be right. Therefore all generations must be prepared, just as down the centuries every mother in Israel expected to give birth to the Christ and so maintained an attitude of perpetual readiness.

New Testament writers used the word *kairos*, usually translated "age" or "epoch," to describe a long period of time marked by a signal, culminating historic event. This is certainly clear from Scripture, and so can be held as a simple article of faith without delving into the complexities of dispensationalism. The Creation, the Fall, Noah's Flood, the Tower of Babel, the call of Abraham, the giving of the Law to Moses, the reign of King David, and the Babylonian Captivity certainly qualify as epochal events of the Old Testament. St. Matthew divides his genealogy into three periods: "fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the

exile to the Christ" (Mt 1:17). And St. Paul says of the epoch that saw the fulfillment of the promise, "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son" (Gal. 4:4).

In the same way Jesus defines the end times as an age characterized by the proclaiming of salvation by faith in Christ and culminating in the second coming. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Mt 28:19–20). He warns against becoming preoccupied with eschatological speculation, saying that we should occupy ourselves with evangelism: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:7–8). With these clear Scriptures in mind, we see that while the second coming of Christ will be the culminating sign of the end, the preaching of the gospel is the ongoing sign of the last days.

While so occupied, however, it is given to believers to have a certain general awareness of the times in which they live. In Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, Jesus outlines the signs of the times to whet our appetite for the wedding supper of the Lamb. "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door" (Mt 24:32–33). The majority of the people of this world will be preoccupied with worldly things and will be caught off guard by the second coming of Christ. Some wag even came up with a final headline for *The New York Times*, all in doomsday type: CHRIST RETURNS—STOCKS TUMBLE. Those who know Jesus will be ready. "But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief" (1 Th 5:4). The faithful will be watching the signs of the times and exhorting one another to preparedness, evangelism, good works, and holy living.

Within this last age of the world, between the first and second coming, while signs of the approaching end are ongoing and the work of preaching goes forward, there are indications of smaller periods characterized by their own signal events. The beginning saw an emphasis on outreach to the Jews (Acts 1:8). This came to pass. Jesus said that the Gentiles would be converted (Acts 1:8). This came to pass. Christians expected that their religion would increase to great proportions (Mt 13:31–33). This came to pass. It was a *kairos*. The time was right.

But Scripture also teaches that late in the last days there will be a change of atmosphere surrounding the gospel. "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Mt 24:12–13). The expansion of the church will slow down. "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith" (1 Tim 4:1). "That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first" (2 Th 2:3 KJV). The hand of God that held back Satan's attacks from the church will be taken away, and "Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth" (Rev 20:7–8).

Something like this seems to have come to pass in our own time. The Assemblies of God has grown dramatically while the United Methodist Church, America's largest Protestant denomination, has shrunk by thirty per cent, a loss of market share that would drive any business into the ground. Megachurches draw bigger and bigger crowds while small congregations quietly slip away like old folks in a nursing home. One denominational executive was heard to remark that when the statistical reports of rapidly growing congregations using Church Growth methods are corrected for local demographics, the difference disappears. In other words, the church that is growing by ten per cent per year is located in a community that is growing by ten per cent or more per year. Meanwhile the Mormons have exploded out of Utah and developed a savvy ad campaign that makes them look almost like a regular Christian denomination. Almost.

When the statistical reports of rapidly growing congregations using Church Growth methods are corrected for local demographics, the difference disappears.

Not that the mainline Protestant denominations are helping any with their espousal of doctrines that contradict the Bible, beginning with their adoption of a modernist theology that denies the inspiration of the Bible. Plus, New Age ideas are filtering into every level of religious thought, with erstwhile Christians holding views diametrically opposed to the faith, as any working pastor can tell you. And despite the considerable spiritual energy created in the past fifty years by Billy Graham Crusades, the Ecumenical Movement, the Charismatic Movement, Key '73, I Found It, the Jesus Freaks, the Lutheran Hour, the Liturgical Renewal, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Young Life, Campus Crusade, Navigators, InterVarsity, the Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts, L'Abri, Contemporary Christian Music, celebrity converts, televangelism, the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship, Women's Aglow, Church Growth and Promise Keepers, the overall percentage of the population in church on Sunday, the one reliable statistical indicator of real religious activity in the nation, has remained constant at around forty per cent. In short, there is no revival going on. We are not in the next Great Awakening.

Regarding this falling away John Stephenson says:

> We live in the throes of a tragic intra-ecclesial defection from Christ which currently poses a massive threat to the integrity of His church as she subsists in a multiplicity of confessions and denominations. . . . Already two generations ago Pieper was fully aware of the deep apostasy afflicting Christendom, being moved by increasingly virulent denial of the vicarious atonement to assert that history had in fact entered upon the "little season" predicted in Revelation 20:3.

Can this be right? Today the Christian faith is persecuted but growing in Africa and Asia while it has stagnated in America and shriveled in Europe.

Those who think about these things keep a close watch on the leaves of the fig tree, so to speak. They know that they cannot calculate the day and hour of Christ's return and so must keep watch on a daily basis, redeeming the time, for the days are evil. At the same time, like the men of Issachar, they make a responsible effort to understand the times in which they live and to discern what the church should do.

A MODEL OF HISTORICAL CHANGE

Secular thinkers have attempted to understand the times, albeit with limited success. This is not to argue that there is nothing of value produced by the secular mind. Far from it. God, who created the world and all things in it, is a loving heavenly Father, and sends rain upon both the just and the unjust. He distributes natural gifts among the men and women of the human race, whether they are saved or not. Intellectual gifts are given to all kinds of people, Christian and non-Christian. Secular thinkers have recognized the brilliant work of the greatest Christian minds. Conversely, the Christian does well to glean wisdom from the best secular thinkers. Among the best-known philosophers of history are Karl Marx, Oswald Spengler, H. G. Wells, and Arnold Toynbee. Each in his own way peered into the mystery of major cultural change. Some were optimistic, others pessimistic.

For our purposes, the most helpful model of historical change—and one that is more consistent with a Christian worldview—can be found in the work of Pitirim A. Sorokin (1889–1968). This Russian émigré was founder and chairman of the Department of Sociology at Harvard, 1930–1944. The most eminent sociologist of his generation, Sorokin came from the older, prophetic school of sociology, proceeding not only by research but intuition, prediction, and rebuke. While Sorokin is not an apologist for the Christian faith *per se*, the outlines of his thought—unlike those of Marx, Spengler, Wells or Toynbee (who was a friend and admirer of Sorokin's)—generally fall within a Christian framework. He does not envision a unified world religion, much less a world state. Having grown up in Russia where he was thrown in jail once by Czar Nicholas and once by Lenin, he was deeply suspicious of totalitarianism in any form. Moreover, he excludes any syncretistic world religion like Wells or even an equalization of competing world religions like Toynbee. In fact, the final sentence of his *The Crisis of Our Age* is "*Benedicite qui venit in nomine Domini*" ("Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord"), a clear reference to the second coming of Christ.

Like most European intellectuals Sorokin had believed in the idea of enlightened human progress, and like most European intellectuals his faith in such cultural evolution was shattered by World War I. His personal crisis led him as a professional sociologist to undertake a scientific inquiry into systems of culture. Spengler's *Decline of the West* was much in vogue in the 1920s, but Sorokin had the idea that perhaps western civilization, though deeply troubled, was perhaps not coming to a complete and final end. His hypothesis was rather that twentieth century western society was going through a turbulent but limited period of transition between two major cultural systems, which he called the Sensate and the Ideational. He argued that the crisis would deepen and continue through the twentieth century, but eventually resolve itself into a new mode of civilization very different from that which had characterized the Modern Era.

To test this hypothesis, Sorokin recruited teams of researchers, each team having a different area of academic expertise. To each he assigned the task of researching a different area of human activity, to see if there were any variations or patterns over the past thirty centuries of western civilization. To none did he communicate his general theory; each team was working independently. These teams investigated trends in major cultural indicators such as the fine arts, science, philosophy, religion, ethics, law, family, government, criminality, and war. As the results began to come in, Sorokin found his hypothesis confirmed by the evidence. He began to publish his findings in the 1920s, culminating in his *magnum opus*, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*.

Sorokin's theory is that western civilization has experienced major cultural movement over a period of many centuries, oscillating slowly between two modes, the Sensate and the Ideational. In the Sensate cultural mode, true reality is sensory. Material values predominate. An example of this would be the Roman Empire. Its focus was on practical matters such as efficient systems of government, the military, transportation, communication, sanitation, and so forth. At the opposite pole is the Ideational cultural mode. In this system, true reality is supersensory. Spiritual values predominate. An example of this would be the Christian Middle Ages. The central organizing authority was not the state but the church. The most important buildings were constructed for religious purposes. Many men and women abandoned the pursuit of material gain in order to devote their lives to prayer in monasteries. A proliferation of religious festivals kept the people focused on the world to come, to the detriment of the economy.

Both systems at their peak tend to be stable and relatively long lasting. The Roman Empire really did hang together rather well for about seven hundred years, and the *Pax Romana* endures in our vocabulary as a proverbial period of world peace. Likewise the stasis of the medieval world produced a long period of Christian civilization in which the arts of architecture, theology, education and liturgy reached a high degree of development.

The Christian does well to glean wisdom from the best secular thinkers.

During each period of dominance of one of these cultural modes, there are representatives of what Sorokin calls "the unintegrated opposite principle." That is, in each historical period there is both a dominant and recessive mode. In an Ideational phase, the Sensate continues but as a weaker influence. During a Sensate phase, the Ideational is still present but not as strongly. There were saints in Rome, sceptics in the Middle Ages. It is never all one or the other, never entirely Sensate or entirely Ideational.

Nor does either cultural mode stay in ascendency for an indefinite period of time. Each carries within itself the seeds of its own decay, leading to periods of transition. Sensate Rome got bigger and louder and more and more worldly, and as its decadent phase accelerated, the representatives of the unintegrated opposite principle—in this case the religiously-minded Christians—gathered momentum and moved into ascendancy.

Sorokin calls these periods of change Idealistic. For our purposes here I will use the simpler and less confusing term "transitional." In these periods cultural values are partly sensory, partly supersensory. These are times in which indicators of cultural dislocation and social upheaval are intensified: more wars, revolutions, suicides, divorces, delinquency, and crime. They are also times of great artistic achievement. An example of such a transitional period would be what has come to be called the Dark Ages, when Sensate Rome was declining and the Ideational Christian Church was on the rise. It was during this time that rhyme was introduced into western poetry by St. Ambrose as a way to help Christians memorize religious verse.

Another example of a transitional phase would be that period variously referred to as the Reformation and the Renaissance, in which the Ideational medieval world was giving way to the Sensate Modern Era. The achievement of the poet Shakespeare needs no comment. It is also interesting to note that the sharpened eschatological expectations of St. Augustine (c. 400) and Martin Luther (c. 1500) occurred just during these periods of transition.

Our own twentieth century, Sorokin argued, is also one of these periods of transition between two major cultural systems as the Sensate Modern Era is breaking up and our civilization is moving into a more Ideational cultural mode. A spiritual society is emerging. In a way, these transitional periods between large cultural systems are like the shorter transitional seasons of spring and fall, partly warm and partly cool, which move us from the longer, more unified seasons of winter and summer. To use another image, time is like a river that flows along at a constant rate. But in the river there are warm and cold currents. Now one is near the surface, now another, as anyone who has swum in a river knows very well. Where the currents cross, there is turbulence.

In attempting to understand the major cultural trends of our own times, one must give attention to the importance of the fine arts. Indeed, Sorokin's teams studied over 100,000 works of art and literature from the Middle Ages to 1930. Art mirrors society. It does not shape it. Shelly called poets the "unacknowledged legislators of the world." The evidence does not seem to bear this out, even though the arts constitute the best indicator we have of cultural trends. What is going on in society is always reflected in the arts. As Charles Simic says,

> Just when everything else seems to be going to hell in America, poetry is doing just fine . . . . Poetry is always the cat concert under the window of the room in which the official version of reality is being written. . . But what if the poets are not crazy? What if they convey the feel of a historical period better than anybody else?

With this in mind, we can see the differences between the major cultural modes in terms of the arts. Ideational art tends to be symbolic, static, and focused on spiritual or supersensory things. Sensate art, by contrast, tends to be concrete, dynamic, and stimulating to the senses. Compare a medieval chant with a Beethoven symphony and you begin to get the picture. Or a Byzantine icon with a painting by Rubens. The chant and the icon are static and anonymous, carefully designed to uplift the spirit and impart religious meaning through symbol. By contrast, we know the names of Beethoven and Rubens; their work, while designed with equal care, is dynamic and powerful, leading the listener or viewer to an experience of emotional intensity.

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It is important to note that we experience a fairly uniform culture on both sides of the Atlantic. Sorokin never speculates about the deeper underlying causes, but demonstrates that both Europe and America are on about the same cultural timetable. Rationalism appears in Europe, England, and America in the eighteenth century, Romanticism in the nineteenth, Modernism in the twentieth.

Interestingly, there seem to occur in history key events that seem to symbolize the spirit of the age. For example, the Titanic was just a ship, but its sinking at just that moment in history seemed to capture symbolically a great deal of meaning, as many serious commentators and popular songs have observed.

Reaching back in history, then, we find a series of these symbolic events by which we can chart the ebb and flow of our civilization between the Sensate and Ideational modes. The Greek civilization was Ideational, as seen in the otherworldly philosophy of Plato. As this broke down, a transitional period set in around the sixth century B.C., as seen in the plays of Aeschylus, in which a measure of realism is introduced into the dramas about the gods. That a Sensate era is emerging can be seen with the conquests of Alexander the Great around 323 B.C.

The Romans carried on in the Sensate mode, the advent of Christ notwithstanding. But from its small beginnings his coming was to overturn the world. Rome fell into decline. Its fall is commonly dated at 476 A.D. with the end of the reign of the last Roman Emperor. The transitional period we commonly call the Dark Ages (so named by the poet Petrarch in the twelfth century) ensued, partly Sensate and partly Ideational in that its cultural energy was carried forward by the thriving church of Jesus Christ.

The beginning of a new Ideational period can fairly be set in 800 A.D. with the coronation of Charlemagne and the beginning of the Middle Ages. Of course, if the Middle Ages were "middle," we might well ask, "What were they between?" The assumption,

stemming from the Enlightenment, is that they were a not-very-important and decidedly backward period of church dominance between the more progressive Roman empire and the Modern Era. The nomenclature reflects a certain point of view.

The Middle Ages were breaking down by the fourteenth century, and the voyage of Columbus in 1492 signals the beginning of a new transitional period. He sailed partly for material gain, partly out of religious motivations. Thus ensued that fascinating period we sometimes call the Renaissance for its restoration of classical learning; sometimes we call it the Reformation for its revival of biblical Christianity. But a more secular age was emerging, as seen by the declaration of Descartes in 1641, "C*ogito ergo sum*." This is the beginning of Rationalism, and, I would argue, the true date for the beginning of the Modern Era, though the technological advances were a long time coming.

The nearest thing we have to a symbolic event marking the beginning of . . . the Spiritual Society is the syncretistic worship service at Yankee Stadium in 2001.

This Modern period, as I have observed, was predominantly secular and optimistic in outlook. A note of pessimism begins to be heard among poets and writers in England and America in the late nineteenth century, but by the teens of the twentieth century these voices are firmly established and remain so throughout the century. Hence the symbolism of the Titanic in 1912: it represented all the optimism of the modern industrial era, and it sank.

Thus in my analysis the entire twentieth century can be seen as Postmodern in outlook, secular and pessimistic. The work of French literary theorists like Derrida and Foucault is of a piece with early twentieth century poets like T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.

If the breakdown of the Modern Era is pessimistic and secular, we would expect at some point to see the emergence of something quite opposite, something essentially spiritual and optimistic in the general outlook of the people, beginning with the poets. This in fact is what I began to see in the poetry of the late twentieth century, beginning in the 1990s. There is a fascination with eastern religions, but an aversion toward Christianity among A. R. Ammons and other Pulitzer prize-winning poets.

In my book I nominated Woodstock in 1969 as the end of the transition and the beginning of a new Ideational period, since many of the hippies were interested in eastern religions. But I think I was mistaken. The nearest thing we have to a symbolic event marking the beginning of what I call the Spiritual Society is the syncretistic worship service at Yankee Stadium in 2001 in response to the September 11 attack on America by Muslim radicals. There we witnessed the spectacle of Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs all praying together, confirming the assumption that most Americans hold that there are many different and equally valid paths to God. My father was a World War II Navy veteran and a survivor of the Battle of Pearl Harbor. Were he alive today he could tell you that nothing like this happened in America in the wake of December 7, 1941. Yankee Stadium is an indicator that we as a nation are definitely in a new cultural mode.

A flaw in Sorokin's outlook is an implied postmillenial eschatology. He seems to envision a coming Ideational phase of our culture as setting up a spiritual realm something like the Kingdom of God, a renewal of Christian culture that will culminate in the return of Christ, as Barry V. Johnston observes. I contend that a new Ideational phase is indeed coming in western civilization, but that it will oppose the Kingdom of God. We will remain where we have been all along, and where we truly ought to be in Christ—under the cross.

Still, Sorokin seems to go farther and deeper than anyone else in his analysis of western culture. He is a helpful guide in analyzing large systems of cultural change over long periods of time, in helping us understand the times: where we have come from and where we are today and where we may be going. The things he predicted in the 1920s—that the era of dictators and war and social upheaval would continue, that the "war to end all wars" was only a beginning of troubles in a declining Sensate culture—have certainly come to pass. Furthermore, he may give us a clue as to what is coming next. If he is right, we are now seeing the beginnings of a new Ideational phase, a time of renewed interest in spiritual things. Unlike the Middle Ages, however, this new dominant spirituality will not be particularly friendly toward the Christian faith. And for Christians who insist on the ancient truths, it will not be a pleasant time.

So now a new religious atmosphere has come to penetrate all levels of human enterprise in America: science, education, business, the military, the family. How will things look in the future? The classroom of the future will be more cooperative, less authoritarian. The workplace will be less rigid, more flexible, more harmonious and less competitive. Professional sports, already in decline, will continue to dwindle while the arts get bigger. In the 1999 baseball season there was serious concern whether the Montreal Expos were going to be able to stay in business. A year or so before that, the Cincinnati Reds were playing before crowds of 5,000. Meanwhile papers reported attendance at city art museums increasing sharply, even among blue collar people.

Men will be more emotional, women more autonomous. Children will be able to develop more naturally, without all of that bothersome parental authority that comes from patriarchal Christianity. And churches (Protestant and Catholic alike) will get along in a spirit of ecumenical cooperation, with a new and liberating understanding that there is at last only one God and many different paths to find him.

Old political animosities will diminish as conservatives and liberals move together in a new spirit of harmony. In time, this rising tide of new consciousness will naturally result in the transformation of society, and the Age of Aquarius will truly come to pass. People will love one another and have a new understanding of things formerly thought to divide, superficial distinctions like race and culture. Tolerance will be supreme, except of course for that irritating remnant of harsh, right-wing religious extremists

who continue to insist on biblical standards of truth and life. Those people will be found guilty of hate crimes. They will have to be dealt with in no uncertain terms. Church and state will cooperate in the administration of justice.

LIKE A BEAST FROM THE EARTH

All these ingredients in the roiling pot of our culture are about as slippery as cooked okra. It is hard to get a grip on them. We must turn to the Bible to find a metaphor, an image which will help us discern what might be happening in our civilization.

As the hinge of time swings to a new millennium, some are encouraged by possibilities for Christian renewal. Not long ago, at century's end, prominent Protestant Charles Colson quoted a prominent Roman Catholic:

> As we approach the new millennium, I am increasingly convinced that it can be, as Pope John Paul II says, a "springtime for Christianity" . . . The reason is simply that the postmodern age is imploding, crumbling in on itself.

The postmodern age is indeed collapsing, but a consequent springtime for Christianity, as appealing as that might be, would not seem to correspond either to Scripture or to reality. At least not in the way Colson imagines. We have discussed the reality of changes in our culture. What does Scripture teach? Not a springtime for the church, but an autumnal season of increasing storms while the last harvest is gathered in.

In the Revelation, St. John describes two beasts, one from the sea and one from the earth. The beast from the sea "was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them" (Rv 13:7). Here is a symbolic description of the exercise of force against the church. The sea is a common symbol in Scripture for history, government, the temporal affairs of men, always agitated and turbulent, restless, stormy, but with a fixed limit beyond which it cannot go. David praises God "who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations" (Ps 65:7). Certainly this beast is at work against God's holy people throughout the last days. Rome was against us in the beginning, then the Muslims attacked for centuries. The last century saw widespread opposition from Communist governments. Government-sponsored physical persecution continues today worldwide, especially in Africa and China.

The beast from the earth is related to the beast from the sea: "Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth" (Rev 13:14). Here is described not force, but persuasion. This beast is likewise at work against God's people throughout the End Times. As we have seen from a close look at the time of the apostles and fathers, there *was* no golden age in the early church. St. Paul contended with the Judaizers, St. John with the Gnostics. Marcion advanced a gospel with no counterbalancing law, and drew many away from the truth. Our Nicene Creed was developed by the fathers as a statement—indeed, a test—of orthodoxy against the Arian heresy which deemphasized the divinity of Christ. And so it has continued.

The beast out of the earth "symbolizes apostate religion, as 13:1–10 refers to hostile civil government . . . in a broader sense this beast represents all doctrine which undermines the gospel and promotes the purposes of the devil." Taking the Greek word for "beast" I have coined the term *Therian* to describe the advance of false religion which we are seeing in our time. The New Age movement is a beginning. A century or two ago it might have been a passing fad, a trend that would end up as a footnote in a theological textbook. Something much broader and deeper is now emerging.

So what comes after Postmodernism? The Therian Age, an Ideational phase of western—perhaps world—civilization which is innately religious but hostile to Christianity.

Christianity dominated western civilization for a long Ideational period, through the Middle Ages and beyond. There followed a Sensate period, the Modern, in which secular values predominated and Christianity began to decline. This Sensate culture in turn began to break down in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, accompanied by a marked increase in government-backed persecution of the church. So what comes after Postmodernism? I reply, the Therian Age, an Ideational phase of western—perhaps world—civilization which is innately religious but hostile to Christianity. Or, perhaps even worse, a dominant but false Christian church that brings all of its forces to bear against the truth of God's word.

AGAINST THE TIDE

One wonders how the church should respond to larger cultural trends. Sorokin used the term "unintegrated opposite principle" to describe a phenomenon he had observed in which there are always latent Sensate forces present in an Ideational culture and vice versa. It seems to me, however, that the church can and should be in the world as a constant unintegrated opposite principle. Whatever the prevailing trend is, there is something in biblical Christianity to offset it. In a Sensate age the church emphasizes spiritual things. She told both Romans and Moderns to abstain from worldly lusts and set their minds on things above. In a transitional period like the twentieth century where everything is in rapid flux, the church offers stability, tradition, continuity with the past and confidence toward the future. This is precisely the appeal of Eastern Orthodoxy to many Evangelicals today, even though they have had to sacrifice the scriptural principle to get it.

Our culture is moving into a new Ideational phase. Even so, currents of thought from the past remain influential. The challenge now is to counterbalance the continuing arrogance of residual Rationalism with an emphasis on the legitimately supernatural elements of the faith such as miracles, mysteries, and the virgin birth. At the same time true Christianity will oppose the subjectivism of lingering Romanticism with an emphasis on the tangible elements of the faith such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, and forensic justification. The challenge furthermore is to find a

local congregation where these balances are preserved: formal worship that is inspiring, passionate gospel preaching that is doctrinally sound, and Christian fellowship that is warm but calls one to accountability.

The truth of the gospel is often expressed in paradox: the last shall be first; he who loses his life will find it. Confronted with theological tensions, church bodies have often moved toward one pole or the other. Liberals are full of love but have no solid basis for theology. Conservatives have sound doctrine but their hearts are full of envy and hate. The charge might be made that the Roman Catholic Church has emphasized the objective aspects of the Christian faith at the expense of the subjective (rote ritual over personal faith) while the Evangelical denominations have emphasized the subjective at the expense of the objective (a personal relationship with Christ at the expense of the liturgy). Nevertheless there are congregations and denominations where the ancient balances between the objective and subjective are preserved.

As the incarnation is God becoming flesh, art is the materialization of an idea.

In a Therian age the church also offers counterbalance from its reservoir of scriptural teaching and practice. The tendency of the spirit of the age will be for people to become enthusiastic, superspiritual, fanatical, disconnected from the world, floating up higher and higher like a balloon without a string. To this the church brings her theology of the incarnation. God comes down into this world and takes an active role in the affairs of mankind. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. He *made* Adam from the dust of the earth. The Hebrew connotes the image of a sculptor working with clay, sleeves rolled up and hands dirty. In his mercy he fashioned garments for the poor sinners Adam and Eve. In his wrath he destroyed the first world by water.

He loved the world so much that he sent his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent him to us; we were not able to go up to heaven and bring him down. We would have made him a worldly king, but instead Jesus suffered and died on the cross. We offered our paltry good works to God in payment for our sins, but Jesus gave his sinless body. In him we have forgiveness of sins. Angels named him *Immanuel*, which means, "God with us." He comes to us; we do not go to him. He ascended into heaven but remains with us. He is present wherever two or three are gathered together. He is present wherever the word of God is taught in its truth and purity. He is present wherever someone gives a cup of cold water to a prophet. He is present in the poor, in the oppressed, in the least and forgotten of the world. He is present in works of mercy. He is really and truly present in the sacraments of baptism and holy communion. It is these concrete realities which the church puts forward in a superspiritual time.

The incarnation of Christ validates the arts in the church. As the incarnation is God becoming flesh, art is the materialization of an idea. In Christ, we have a man made of flesh and bone, not a ghost, but someone real who walked among us full of grace and truth. Likewise in the sacraments of baptism and holy communion we have God coming to us in the plain simple elements of water, of bread and wine. In a lesser way, art is incarnational. It *embodies* a concept. J. S. Bach, whose music is currently in revival (especially in Japan), was called "the fifth evangelist" because of the deep theological content of his work. The poets George Herbert and John Donne expressed the Christian faith in words. Rembrandt used the medium of paint and canvas to communicate the Christian religion. Today the call goes out to sanctified Christian young people to take up careers in the arts, and for Christian congregations and institutions to support them.

As apologetics was well-suited to an age of reason, the arts will be well-suited to communicate the faith in a Therian age when spiritual things and imagination are highly prized. We have seen the upswing of religious interest in erstwhile secular poets. As noted, there are increasing stirrings among God's people in this area as well. Scott Cairns notes:

> The body of American poetry's . . . remarkable transformation over the past decade—a decade which has seen a widespread return of religious typology, sacramental trope, and a relatively unselfconscious metaphysical speculation. . . . In the span of a few years, we have witnessed a great increase—poets of faith have grown in accomplishment, writing better poems, and already accomplished poets have discovered a path to faith.

Since *Immanuel* means "God with us," its opposite is *enthusiasm*, which means "God in us." As previously noted, it is the tendency in every man to trust his inner religious feelings and attribute them to God. This has been around since the dawn of time. As Luther says in the Smalcald Articles,

> Enthusiasm clings to Adam and his descendents from the beginning to the end of the world . . . and it is the source, strength and power of all heresy, including that of the papacy and Mohammedanism.

On an individual basis, it means that people hold mutually contradictory beliefs based on nothing. This tendency will be even more pronounced in the Therian Age. How should the church respond to it?

The church has always had marvelous theological resources at her fingertips. First of course is the Bible. Congregations everywhere should offer solid Bible study programs for all ages. Give the youth a topic on sexdrugsrock'nroll once in a while, but by all means get them into Romans. Find ways to teach the people to read the Bible on their own. And pastors should preach biblical sermons. That means studying Greek and Hebrew and doing the exegesis on a new text every week. That means laying aside cozy little chats on "Points for Parents" (or better ways to raise potatoes) and telling people what the Bible says. The Bible says Jesus

Christ. *Every* sermon should make a clear proclamation of his saving death and resurrection.

The Bible, however, can be misinterpreted. An enthusiast like Muhammad can claim pure revelation from God apart from any written text. But an enthusiast like the Christian heretic Marcion knew his Bible backwards and forwards. He just chose to interpret it in his own way. In Bible classes pastors encourage people to do the same by asking, "What does this Bible verse mean *to you?*" Because of the constant threat of heresy and in response to it, the church has produced creeds, or statements of belief which define the essential teaching of the Bible.

All heretics, when confronted, cry, "Where's the love?"

There are three basic creeds that every Christian should know and every congregation should study on a regular basis. The Apostles' Creed was the catechism of the early church. Anyone wanting to be baptized had to know it well. This creed defines the Godhead as being comprised of the Father/Creator, the Son/Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit/Sanctifier. The Nicene Creed is Trinitarian in structure like the Apostles', but concentrates on Christological formulations in the Second Article. It was written to expound what the Bible teaches about the nature and work of Jesus Christ. Its wording was designed to repudiate the false teaching of the heretic Arius. The Nicene Creed was written in Greek. The great Latin creed of the church is the Athanasian Creed (which, unfortunately, the Eastern Orthodox churches reject). It developed in France in the sixth century, and goes into detail about the three persons of the Holy Trinity. In liturgical churches it is read on Trinity Sunday.

In addition to these, most church bodies (even Baptists) have *confessions*, doctrinal statements to which all members must adhere. The Lutheran Church has the Augsburg Confession and other doctrinal writings in the Book of Concord. The Presbyterian Church has the Westminster Confession. The Episcopalian Church has the Thirty-nine Articles. In the Therian age, when people want to fly off in every spiritual direction at once, pastors owe it to their people to give them a solid dogmatic foundation. Denominational publishing houses usually carry study guides on these doctrinal writings, suitable for small group or Sunday morning class study.

One characteristic of the Therian age will be complexity. Something like this is already in place when, as mentioned above, people hold contradictory beliefs. The spiritual world of someone like that is as complicated as the life of a man who has two wives. You try to please one, but what you do upsets the other, and vice versa, until you find yourself spinning in circles not knowing what to do. So it is with Therian man. He believes in reincarnation. But then he is a member of a church in which the pastor preaches about the last judgment. This creates dissonance. He goes to work on Monday and becomes an aggressive businessman. Yet he knows the Bible teaches honesty and compassion. More dissonance. Turn, turn, turn. In addition, congregations themselves try to become bigger and bigger and more and more complex as they try to provide something for everyone, like a mall.

Over against this trend the church offers *simplicity*. There is something real about the Christian faith, something small and essential that you can carry in your pocket. Yet there always seems to be enough of it to pass around. We build big, fancy houses of worship to surround a pretty humble meal of bread and wine. We construct enormously complicated systems of dogmatic theology to describe our friendship with a man, the Last Man. If we keep these simple things in mind we will provide healing for tangled-up people living in a too-complex, hurry-up world. In contrast to the degradation of marriage in our world, we find a way by God's grace to keep our covenants. Where there is coarseness and vulgarity around us, we cultivate manners. Indeed, the Geneva Bible, which antedated the KJV of 1611, translated Ephesians 4:32, "Be ye *courteous* to one another." In this regard there may come a trend back to the small, neighborhood congregation where everybody knows everybody. And as an antidote to the increased professionalism and commercialism that has taken over the arts, we still bake our own. You look at the choir on Sunday morning and say, "There's Donna who cuts my hair, and that's Joe who sells insurance." And that man in the pulpit, that is your local *scop*, the poet-*vates*, the man of words who tells your epic at ceremonial functions and keeps your history. To him let there be all the honor that is traditionally reserved for the poet in our culture.

SIEGE WARFARE

I have spoken of this new Ideational phase of western civilization as the Therian age, taking the term from the description in Revelation of the beast from the earth. "Paganism is always tolerant," said Hermann Sasse. The spirit of the Therian age, that beast from the earth, is a friendly beast, large and comfortable, warm and fuzzy, welcoming and inclusive, like a great big lovable bear you would like to hug. In its great arms are enfolded all children of disparate beliefs—as long as they love each other. Men and women find common ground, Protestant and Catholic, Muslim and Jew, liberal and conservative, all are welcome. Love encompasses all.

This beast has teeth and claws, of course. But they stay concealed for the sake of love and inclusiveness. What makes the beast growl and bare its fangs is harshness and intolerance, the kind Elijah showed to Jezebel, Jesus to the Pharisees, Paul to the Judaizers, Augustine to Pelagius, Athanasius to the Arians, Luther to the pope. This makes the beast very angry, this intolerance that truth always shows toward error. All heretics, when confronted, cry, "Where's the love?" But pigheaded prophets persist, even against brotherly admonition. The beast from the earth has teeth and claws, and they are red with the blood of the martyrs.

At the beginning of the New Testament era, Jesus described the church militant in terms of offense: "The gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Mt 16:18). The image is that of an enemy under siege, surrounded and holed up in a walled city, bursting out through the gates from time to time for an incursion, but being driven back in by a superior force.

At the end, by contrast, St. John describes the church militant in terms of defense:

> Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations . . . to gather them for battle . . . .They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves (Rev 20:7–9).

The image here is of a church that is oppressed and weary, under long siege, with supplies running short, facing superior numbers, and hanging on determinedly in the hope that rescue will come in time. Perhaps this image of the church under duress describes our situation today. We may feel like Constantinople under siege by the Ottoman Turks in 1453: we have a good system of ancient bulwarks built by our fathers, but we lack the troops and the discipline to man them. Our God is a mighty fortress; his church is not.

These realities should not deflect our vision from the hope that is ours in Christ. Things are in disarray ecclesiastically, but at the same time Christ is daily working in this raggedy church of his. People get saved every day, even through the most mediocre preaching. Souls are sealed for eternity week by week at the most unimpressive baptismal fonts. The feeblest prayers are heard in heaven and answered by a merciful God. People somehow persist in their faith against all odds and despite all setbacks and failures. Little congregations hang in there and keep their doors open, nobody quite knows how. The ministry, once a high-prestige, low-stress occupation, is today a high-stress, low-prestige calling in human terms, yet somehow men keep answering the call. Persecution is increasing around the globe, yet Christianity (not Islam) is the fastest-growing religion in the world. False doctrine seeps in everywhere, yet the lamp of God's pure revelation is never completely extinguished.

Meanwhile as the devil's church from time to time broke out through its city gates even though surrounded, there is nothing to prevent the church of Jesus Christ under siege from breaking out and taking captives. Why shouldn't we be aggressive, refusing to stay put behind the barricades? Why shouldn't we show some fighting spirit? Why shouldn't we mount up and ride?

There is something warmly eschatological about the claymation film *Chicken Run* (indeed, there is something eschatological about a lot of films these days). Ginger, the brave little hen (reprising Steve McQueen in *The Great Escape*), keeps trying to break out of the concentration camp/chicken coop. The other hens are dispirited and defeated, but Ginger, the lone visionary, keeps trying against impossible odds. Then a savior comes down from above to help them, in this case, a cocky American circus rooster shot from a cannon. There is a final conflict between good and evil, like the hilarious climax of every good divine comedy. In the end the chickens all fly away to paradise: a bird sanctuary. Somehow I am encouraged by this to fight on. Besides, a study of history makes one notice that the times in which the church has been the hardest pressed have also been the times of the greatest missionary activity.

Whether this Therian age we are entering signals the last of the Last Days, the end of the End Times, no one can say. Only God knows. This world may lurch along for another thousand years. That is only a day to the Lord, anyway. In our pain we are desperate for the relief that will come with Christ's return. But if he delays, we know it is because in his great love and divine mercy there remain a few more souls that can be saved, perhaps through your testimony. As we labor in the vineyard we see the sun that rose in the east now declining in the west. The hour is hastening on. The night comes, when no man can work. We are not in darkness. The appearing of the Lord will delight but not surprise us. We have been expecting him. We are ready. Others may sleep in carnal security, but we keep our wicks trimmed, our lamps burning, alert, self-controlled, abounding in good works, encouraging one another and building each other up in our most holy faith, and fighting the good fight.

Rescue will come in time. The camp of God's people was surrounded by its enemies, "But fire came down from heaven and devoured them" (Rv 20:9). Just when it seems that all is lost for the church under siege, there comes a shout and the sound of a trumpet, lightning flashes from the east to the west, the sign of the cross appears in the sky, and Jesus Christ returns to bring a close to history.

> *I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away"* (Rv 21:3–4).

Coming to Grips with "Civility"

A Strategy for the Postmodern Parish

David R. Liefeld

It may seem incongruous to write of an "ethic of civility" today, particularly after a century that produced two total wars and several totalitarian political systems tyrannizing millions of people—indeed, a century that ended as it began, with seemingly intractable ethnic violence in the Balkans. Actually, there long have been indications that modernity may strip away the veneer of civilization. The poet W. B. Yeats wrote already of seemingly modern chaos in 1921:

> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.

Some early saw the potential for evil, and not only good, lurking within modern culture. Those still obsessed with recitations of religious violence associated with the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Thirty Years War or the colonization of the Americas, are due for a reality check.

So what is the "ethic of civility," if not compassion, since the evidence is all around us that we are as incapable as ever of treating each other humanely? To some degree, I am going to be arbitrary in my definition of terms, taking my cue from Humpty Dumpty of *Through the Looking-Glass* who said, "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less." The "ethic of civility," as I use the terminology, is both a mental attitude and the social behaviors, usually called tolerance, that are a direct result of modernity's pluralistic tendencies. I also distinguish between postmodern and postmodernism. Postmodernism is a philosophy that is extremely modern. It is a methodology in which all of the pluralistic tendencies of modernity have resulted in nihilistic deconstruction, in which the attempt to pursue universal meaning of any sort simply has been abandoned.[1]

My use of the term *postmodern,* on the other hand, is simply descriptive. It is a condition in which the modern can no longer be celebrated as the advent of material prosperity, peace and joy, in which the problems seem to dwarf any proposed solutions. It is a condition of uncertainty and malaise in which it is as yet truly unclear what we will become and what we will do with the problem of having become modern. "Postmodern" does not mean, nor does it imply, that we can actually *stop* being modern. It does mean that much of the early enthusiasm about being modern, which some historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries characterized as "modernism," has evaporated. "Postmodern" refers to living in the aftermath of the rise and fall of modernism.

Modernity, likewise, is a merely descriptive term. It denotes the cultural forces that have produced and are still producing what we know as the modern world. *Modernism,* like the other terminology with which it is associated, has been variously defined. For some theorists, and for this essay, it is a general term used to describe the celebration of modernity. However, there was also a movement within art and literature at the outset of the twentieth century called "Modernism" that was, although a product of modernity, highly critical of modernity. It was from this movement that the quotation from Yeats, cited earlier, drew its inspiration. This movement saw the instability of a culture bereft of its traditional center. Therefore, Modernism (unlike the nihilistic Postmodernism that followed it) sought to find a new center for modern culture, albeit without success. Because this movement was so dependent upon modernity for its methodology, and because it was essentially optimistic about the re-centering of modern culture, one can argue that it also was in fact a celebration of modernity.

MODERNITY AND THE AMERICAN "RELIGION OF CIVILITY"

While we can trace modernity directly to the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, its roots are in the Renaissance. It was the Renaissance that gave birth to a European lay culture in which the focus increasingly was on the studies of man (*studia humanitatis*), studies in which man himself was increasingly the measure of all things, accelerating the process of secularization.[2] Within the Renaissance, the Reformation also brought a structural shift in the relationship between church and state. No longer would western civil society be securely anchored in the Christian world-view. The medieval *corpus Christianum* was shattered and in its place a plurality of competing authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical, sought the allegiance of an increasingly autonomous individual. As Steve Bruce observes,

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> the religion created by the Protestant Reformation was extremely vulnerable to fragmentation because it removed the institution of the church as a source of authority between God and man. . . . The consequence of the Reformation was not one Christian church purified and strengthened but a large number of competing perspectives and institutions.[3]

With plurality of competing Christian confessions, not only was Holy Roman catholicity shattered, but the truth-claims of Christianity itself were implicitly relativized.

The early enthusiasm about being modern, which some historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries characterized as "modernism," has evaporated.

The layman's right to judge the truth of doctrine, grounded in Scripture, unleashed a tidal wave of cultural revolution that eventually became, in effect, a new sphere of individual autonomy.[4] It was this cultural process that took its characteristically modern shape in the Enlightenment. The positions of the *philosophes* of the seventeenth century ranged from bellicose paganism to Christianity that was sympathetic to the Enlightenment. It is dangerous to over-generalize such a complex and diverse period. Nevertheless, for Peter Gay, "to speak of secularization is to speak of a subtle shift of attention: religious institutions and religious explanations of events were slowly being displaced from the center of life to its periphery."[5] As a result, according to A. N. Wilson, by the nineteenth century "for the first time in Europe a generation was coming to birth who had no God, or no God of any substance, and who found it difficult to justify religion except in the most basic of Utilitarian terms."[6] The most basic utility of religion generally remained social cohesion, what has come to be called *civil religion.*

The emergence of state power during the Enlightenment coincided with what Outram calls the *new religious idea* that was "possibly its [the Enlightenment's] most important legacy to succeeding centuries."[7] This new idea was tolerance, which was used by enlightened bureaucratic states to pacify populations of mixed religious confession, a necessary precondition for the unification and growth of the modern nation-state.[8] The separation of public from private spheres nurtured by tolerance included the enthronement of human reason and promoted an explosion of capitalism as well as the eventual emergence of consumerism.[9]

It was the emergence of consumerism based upon industrialization and urbanization, more than any philosophy, which has characterized American modernity. From 1880 to 1910, more than eleven million native-born Americans moved from the countryside to the cities. At the same time, the focus of American society shifted from the values of thrift and productivity to the values of spending and consumption. As Gary Cross sees it, there was a "wedding of technology to the pursuit of happiness."[10] Indeed, a new materialist gospel was generated. This "gospel of abundance" in a "culture of consumption" meant a shift in core values from making a social contribution to the need for self-satisfaction.[11] Freedom of self-expression and pursuit of personal fulfillment are at the heart of American modernity.

As the nation's center of gravity shifted from the land to the city, Americans resisted any modification to the powerful myth of American homogeneity. One of the earliest threats of modernity for American culture, given the agrarian values of the Jeffersonian republic, was the industrialized city itself. Leo Marx described it as the conflict of technology with the pastoral ideal in America.[12] This threat was particularly ominous because it jeopardized a central myth of the American civil religion; namely, that in the virgin wilderness of America, Europe could be reborn. As Marx explained it,

> In its simplest, archetypal form, the myth affirms that Europeans experience a regeneration in the New World. They become new, better, happier men; they are reborn. In most versions the regenerative power is located in the natural terrain: access to undefiled, bountiful, sublime Nature is what accounts for the virtue and special good fortune of Americans.[13]

The machine, and the city it created, was seen as a moral evil because it undermined the bucolic *mythos* with which Americans originally had defined themselves. In the throes of urbanization, the "mystic chords of memory" began to clash with the realities of everyday American life.[14] Even now, the urban flight in major metropolitan areas reflects the anxiety many Americans feel about city life.

A particular threat of American modernity was the immigrant, found increasingly in the city, who represented an implicit threat to the Reformed hegemony of the early American republic.[15] Although American civil religion portrays the nation as a haven for immigrants, Americans have always been apprehensive about immigrants. Timothy Walch noted:

> The Founding Fathers had frequently referred to the new nation as an asylum for anyone seeking equality of opportunity and freedom from tyranny. Yet none of these White Anglo-Saxon Protestant men ever envisioned a nation of multiple cultures and religions. It was assumed that every immigrant would, in the words of John Quincy Adams, "cast off the European skin" and become American.[16]

The process of immigrant assimilation was often described by early American theorists in terms of spiritual conversion, the transformation of the Old Adam. The cooption of this biblical language for the civil religion is quite understandable if the United States was indeed the new Jerusalem populated by those fleeing decadent Europe in order to be "born again." So well established was this idea that, eventually, a relatively secularized version entered the mainstream of Americanism. Ralph Waldo Emerson's notebook entry in 1845 expressed it with the melting-pot theme:

> [S]o in this Continent,—asylum of all nations, the energy of Irish, Germans, Swedes, Poles and (the) Cossacks, and all the European tribes,—of the Africans, and of the Polynesians, will construct a new race, a new religion, a new state, a new literature, which will be as vigorous as the new Europe which came out of the smelting pot of the Dark Ages.[17]

As a consequence, whether rooted in Reformed theology or secular philosophical ideals, the result was the same: the immigrant was expected quickly to adopt American values and lifestyles.

The term *Americanization* actually appeared first in the anti-Catholic, nativist outbursts of the "Know-Nothing" era in the mid-nineteenth century. Philip Gleason points to a Roman Catholic commentator of that time, Orestes Brownson, who revealed the intense pressure for assimilation precisely in his assessment of the "Know-Nothings:"

> The nativists, Brownson conceded, were misguided in their bigotry, but they also gave voice to legitimate national concerns. What their outcry signified—and what Catholics must realize—was that America had a nationality of its own and that Americans would not tolerate the perpetuation of foreign nationalities on their soil. For that reason, the Catholic religion would never prosper here if it were inseparably linked to a foreign nationality. Immigrant Irish Catholics must therefore distinguish their Catholicity from their Irish nationality and learn American ways.[18]

Brownson had grasped that all Americans were expected to adopt the American civil religion. America was unlike any other country and failure to shed the old ways betrayed her.

When significant numbers of eastern European and Oriental immigrants began arriving late in the nineteenth century, many Americans fretted. In 1908, Israel Zangwill crystallized American expectations for the immigrants in his play, *The Melting Pot*, an evocative metaphor of both the persistent problem and the enduring hope of ethnic harmony in America. The play and its metaphor spoke to the growing anxieties of many Americans by trumpeting what could no longer be taken for granted. Indeed, with strikingly vivid language, Zangwell's leading man proclaimed at the conclusion of the play:

> Here shall they all unite to build the Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God. Ah, Vera, what is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem where all nations and races come to worship and look back, compared with the glory of America, where all races and nations come to labour and look forward![19]

The expectation of such sentiments, writes Michael Kammen, was "that Old World ethnicity or national identity ought to be forgotten in the United States so that all the diverse fragment-groups might fuse together in creating a new and superior American nationality."[20] More important than this, however, was the expectation that all good Americans would subscribe to the creed of Americanism. The outbreak of World War I only sharpened this concern for national unity amidst ethnic diversity and led to the heavy-handed tactics of the Americanization Movement.

A significant shift began to occur in American self-understanding after World War I. Horace Kallen (a particularly vocal critic of the Americanization movement) coined the term "cultural pluralism." For Kallen, the key to the meaning of America was its tolerance of diversity. Like John Dewey, who held similar views, Kallen was an American nationalist who thought that the strength of America was democratic tolerance. In the 1930s and 1940s, this understanding of America began to emerge as the new civil religion. By then, John Dewey had cemented Horace Mann's vision of a democratic society grounded in the universal public education of children from all religious and ethnic backgrounds. While Dewey believed that the aim of education was the development of the individual, he also believed that this was best accomplished through the promotion of egalitarian democracy.[21] A devout humanist, Dewey nevertheless considered the public schools to be religious in the sense that they promoted the vitality of democratic societies. "By teaching both self-respect and respect for others, the schools promoted a social unity that was truly religious in character," Gleason writes. The educational philosophy of John Dewey is the epitome of both civil religion and the ethic of civility.

The term* Americanization *actually appeared first in the anti-Catholic, nativist outbursts of the "Know-Nothing" era.

While Kallen's original use of the term *cultural pluralism* was anti-assimilationist (in that he opposed forcibly assimilating immigrants), those who used the term after him came to have exactly the opposite intentions. According to Gleason,

> When the term was taken up by the students of intergroup relations in the late thirties, however, cultural pluralism had lost its hard edge and become an enlightened form of Americanization theory. . . . It was, in other words, a relaxed version of the classic melting pot ideal, which was precisely what Kallen meant to discredit and overthrow.[22]

Thus, the new ideology of cultural pluralism began to serve the modern ethic of civility in order to homogenize rather than to stabilize American culture. That is, the new proponents of cultural pluralism tended to propose it precisely to unify and harmonize Americans rather than to preserve their true diversity. Rather than standing in opposition to assimilation, as originally conceived, Gleason contends that cultural pluralism "was usually presented as an enlightened and liberal means of achieving the goal of assimilation, a harmoniously united society."[23]

The socio-economic experiences of Americans early in the twentieth century reinforced this assimilationist approach to cul-

tural pluralism. The 1920s had been an orgy of consumption that horrified most Americans. The arrival of economic distress in the 1930s, therefore, renewed a yearning for traditional, conservative values. Recognizing anew how dangerous life could be led young and old alike to seek common goals that were achievable only through mutual support.[24] The outbreak of World War II intensified this trend by making the nation seem more of a community. Yet, the vast wartime relocations and, later, the mobility of the suburban middle class weakened attachment to regional place and culture more than ever before. As a result, there was no return to the past; the yearning for traditional values was refocused. Americans pursued what William Graebner calls "the culture of the whole."[25] What earlier generations of Americans had sought from their local communities (families, schools and churches) was now sought from larger affiliations, such as the nation. Martin Marty has pointed to the 1940s as a time in which the reintegration of American churches was urged by some prominent internationalists with particular vigor. It was thought that, in order to save a self-destructively fractured world, the Christian churches ought to lead the way with a unified Christian understanding of religion.[26]

One result of this cultural tide toward unity was insistence that all good Americans subscribe to the creed of democratic tolerance.

One result of this cultural tide toward unity was insistence that all good Americans subscribe to the creed of democratic tolerance. A crucial element in that tide, of course, was the world war itself. Unlike the First World War, which spawned ugly outbursts of nativist passions and the Americanization Movement, the Second World War was fought in defense of pluralism. Hardly a film came out of Hollywood during the war without some sort of allusion to why we fight; namely, that whatever our race, religion or ethnic background, we were all Americans living harmoniously in democratic freedom. Gleason observes that "the first notable effect of the war was that, by making the need for national unity more compelling, it intensified the efforts that were already underway to cut down on prejudice, improve inter-group relations, and promote greater tolerance of diversity."[27] Gleason elaborated:

> More directly relevant to our interest, of course, was the great ideological reawakening of the wartime years which simultaneously: 1) promoted national unity on the basis of value consensus; 2) exalted toleration and respect for cultural differences as the means of attaining intergroup harmony; and 3) stimulated curiosity about the way in which the American social and cultural environment shaped persons of all derivations toward a common national type.[28]

Even Horace Kallen, who had opposed Americanization of immigrants when he considered it a tool of immigrant assimilation, endorsed Americanization when it later came to mean inculcating the American values of tolerance and cultural pluralism! Kallen's apparent change of mind with regard to Americanization of immigrants raises the issue of recontextualization (the transformation of meaning over time, depending upon the needs and purposes that the language serves). It is important to see how traditional values are often reinvigorated by modernity to serve new purposes. Values that once meant one thing under conditions of premodernity can mean something very different when recontextualized. "In short," Gleason alleges, "cultural pluralism in all its ambiguities and complexities is the crucial legacy of World War II with respect to American identity."[29]

By the 1960s, cultural pluralism (with its ostensible tolerance of diversity) had become the official creed of American civil religion even though its practical effect was profoundly assimilationist. John Murray Cuddihy, who analyzed this paradoxical phenomenon in 1977, described it as a "religion of civility." Writes Gleason:

> Cuddihy converts civil religion into the "religion of civility." He then proceeds to show how the American imperative of civility—showing respect for others; at its blandest, "being nice"—requires the believers in different religious faiths to moderate their public claims to exclusive possession of the truth, extend de facto recognition to others, and thereby implicitly acquiesce in the reduction of their own faith-position to one among many, all of which must abide by the prescriptions of the secular religion of civility. Cuddihy's brilliant analysis not only operationalizes civil religion but also explains why the ideal of pluralistic tolerance is emotionally unsatisfying, for civility does not promise genuine solidarity, much less salvation.[30]

Gleason realizes that "the reconciliation of conflicting group identities and group boundaries is a perennial problem" in spite of the ethic of civility.[31] The "being nice," after all, does nothing to create authentic solidarity in the midst of genuine diversity or actual conflict. The only authentic solidarity lies in the common social experiences of modernity, such as consumerism.

The process that reversed the meaning of "cultural pluralism" in the twentieth century was modernity. When people are securely located within traditional enclaves (both geographically immobile and socially stable within traditional familial, occupational and communal systems), their value systems remain largely intact and resistant to change. So it was precisely as Americans experienced significant dislocation in their physical and social space (moving geographically and/or experiencing significant disruption of their social systems) under conditions of modernity that they became prepared to consider a restructuring of their traditional values. Tolerance of diversity, Gleason observed, "comes easiest to those have detached themselves somewhat from a specific familial, local or ethnic tradition and have learned to get along with others whose background differs from their own."[32] Because traditional values had become so closely associated with particular physical and social systems that no longer existed or which were under attack, these values proved to be highly vulner-

able, if not to extinction, then to restructuring. Most traditional values that survived, only survived in modernized form. As a result, the ethic of civility became well entrenched within the psyche of Americans in the twentieth century.

Modernity, therefore, is a problem that has yet defied solution. Its fundamental engines are profoundly uniformitarian. Economically and socially, Americans are shaped and reshaped by forces that break down traditional barriers between ethnic and religious subcultures. At the same time, the American civil religion legitimates this "culture of the whole" by speaking of cultural pluralism and civility, of tolerance and respect for diversity. It is an ideology that promises more than it can deliver.

MODERNITY AND THE RESTRUCTURING OF AMERICAN RELIGION

Paradoxical or not, there *is* an "ethic of civility," and this ethic cannot help but have a profound effect on American religion. Indeed, according to Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow, American religion has been "restructured." This restructuring, in Wuthnow's view, "was closely related to the rising influence of higher education" as well as what was being taught; namely, "greater awareness of constitutional guarantees of civil liberties and deeper understanding of the relativity of cultural preferences."[33] In order to understand this restructuring by the forces of modern cultural change, we need to see how the symbolic boundaries of American religion have changed. We also need to see how, as Bruce puts it, those "who continue to do religion do it in an increasingly individualistic and idiosyncratic manner."[34]

The incredible pace and diversity of modernization early became a crisis for many Americans. As much as they enjoyed the increasing material prosperity, they also were disturbed by the escalating threats to their core values. According to Robert Wiebe, "America in the late nineteenth century was a society without a core." Wiebe elaborates:

> It lacked those national centers of authority and information which might have given order to such swift changes. American institutions were still oriented toward community life where family and church, education and press, professions and government, all largely found their meaning by the way they fit one with another inside a town or a detached portion of a city. As men ranged farther and farther from their communities, they tried desperately to understand the larger world in terms of their small, familiar environment. They tried, in other words, to impose the known upon the unknown, to master an impersonal world through the customs of a personal society. They failed, usually without recognizing why; and that failure to comprehend a society they were helping to make contained the essence of the nation's story.[35]

George Cotkin depicted these anxieties as "reluctant modernism." It was a state of mind that has, in fact, persisted well into the twenty-first century. It meant that exhilaration with technological advancements was combined with a nagging dread that the changes would have profoundly negative long-term effects. As T. J. Jackson Lears described it,

> antimodern dissenters, despite their drift toward accommodation, nevertheless preserved a powerful insight, a feeling, sometimes clearly articulated and sometimes only dimly sensed, that the modern secular utopia was after all a fraud.[36]

The confident optimism that had characterized American civil religion for its first century was dwindling. "Doubts about God and progress, the twin pillars of nineteenth-century confidence," wrote Cotkin, "also contributed to the pessimism common around the turn of the century."[37]

Reluctant or not, these reluctant modernists nevertheless accommodated modernity through their contributions to a therapeutic culture which was also increasingly bureaucratic.[38] The goal of this culture was self-fulfilment and, according to Jackson Lears, "it was not simply a case of old wine in new bottles": "The social engineers rejected all fixed values, deifying growth and experience as ends in themselves; their strategies corroded larger ethical and religious frameworks of meaning outside the self."[39] Furthermore, while the emerging therapeutic culture of the late nineteenth century, with its self-absorbed quests for personal authenticity, may once have been the exclusive preserve of cultural elites, that is no longer the case. Jackson Lears perceives that it now "pervades our dominant culture, touching people who have never been analyzed and who are only dimly aware of psychiatry."[40] Postmodern culture is as thoroughly therapeutic as it is a culture of consumption.

As much as they enjoyed the increasing material prosperity, they also were disturbed by the escalating threats to their core values.

The therapeutic culture is particularly noticeable with religion, as Steve Bruce contends: "The simplest way of describing the changes in content is to say that the supernatural has been diminished and it [Christianity] has been psychologized or subjectivized."[41] Noting that Evangelicalism has in fact *thrived* under conditions of modernity, David Watt concluded that American Evangelicalism is "a sign that a new sort of faith . . . that owes at least as much to modern psychology as to Paul, is being born."[42] One key to understanding the modern American religious ethos is the confusion of self and God. Indeed, so closely identified are the experiences of the self and God that Harold Bloom can characterize the "American Religion" as "irretrievably Gnostic," the knowing of a "self-within-the-self," in which "the self is truth, and there is a spark at its center that is best and oldest, being the God within."[43] The bulging "self-help" and "evangelical" book shelves in nearly every book store demonstrate their on-going affinity in our postmodern culture.

In two books on American Evangelicalism, sociologist James Davison Hunter argued that even the most conservative elements of American Protestantism have been subtly but steadily accommodating themselves to modernity while ostensibly opposing it. While American Evangelicals were sharply critical of Modernists at the beginning of the twentieth century for abandoning the supernatural, by the end of the twentieth century Evangelicals had done much the same thing in their embrace of the therapeutic culture.[44] Evangelicalism's cognitive style also had succumbed to modernity's thoroughgoing rationality and pluralism. "The civility of the contemporary Evangelical message," noted Hunter, "makes it less objectionable to nonbelievers."[45] While some may argue that these changes are only cosmetic, the stylistic changes have extended to the presentation of God Himself:

> Whatever else may be said, the fire, the caprice, and the majesty that formerly pervaded the imagery of God is largely gone. The vision of a God whose "thoughts are not our thoughts" and whose "ways are not our ways" has all but vanished. Such a perception lacks plausibility in the modern situation. Instead and more consonant with the modern scene, God has become predictably rational, tolerant, familiar, and subjectivistic. Insofar as the image of God has become redefined in this way, God has become domesticated in the consciousness of Evangelicals. His image is less capable of stirring the thoughts and emotions. In this manner as well, the imagery of the contemporary Evangelical God provides tacit though admittedly partial legitimation of the structural forces and cultural consequences of modernity.[46]

While one can still hear the shibboleths of doctrinal orthodoxy, the future of traditional Evangelicalism is in doubt, declared Hunter.

For his second book (*Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation*), Hunter surveyed the basic attitudes of students in Evangelical colleges and seminaries. He discovered: "Far from being untouched by the cultural trends of the post-World War II decades, the coming generation of Evangelicals, in their own distinctive way, have come to participate fully in them."[47] Particularly interesting was how young Evangelicals had adopted the ethic of civility necessitated by cultural and political pluralism. Where Fundamentalists and nineteenth-century Evangelicals were assertive and public in their relations with American culture, the young Evangelicals of today were not only more tolerant in their outlook but also far less strident. Only a small fraction would impose their values on society as a whole and the activities of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority generated a significant backlash among the young Evangelicals. Although Evangelicals had not yet gone as far as Modernists in Protestantism, according to Hunter, the modernizing process underway in each was similar. Hunter wondered whether orthodoxy is possible in the modern world. He responded that, in theory, modernity can be resisted, but that the price paid would be substantial, so substantial as to cast doubt on the practicality of the whole enterprise:

> In short, to reinforce the traditional symbolic boundaries of orthodox Protestantism would require Evangelicals to operate defiantly against these social and cultural constraints [such as rationality and civility]. They would have to publicly invoke and rigorously apply the harsher and more offensive symbols of their faith. In practical terms this would mean publicly labeling people sinners, heretics, infidels; all, though, in danger of God's judgment and eternal punishment. To do so would undoubtedly generate untoward consequences. They would risk offending and alienating not only non-Evangelicals (those they hope to win over to the faith) but their own following as well.[48]

However, such a spirited defense of Evangelicalism is quite unlikely for a simple reason, Hunter claimed: an increasing number of Evangelicals no longer really believe in the sanctity of the traditional symbolic boundaries, nor is there any abiding consensus as to what those boundaries are.

Evangelicalism's cognitive style also had succumbed to modernity's thorough-going rationality and pluralism.

As the traditional symbolic boundaries of American religion have been restructured, charismatic or non-denominational pentecostalism, so-called New Age spirituality, and New Paradigm churches have become increasingly popular. Each reflects, in its own way, the same therapeutic, market-driven forces of modernity that restructured American Evangelicalism. The main virtue of New Age spirituality, according to Bruce, is the seemingly convenient way in which it solves the problem of cultural pluralism; namely, the institutionalization of philosophical relativism, although viewing the New Age as philosophy misses its appeal as culture. Writes Bruce:

> It is the acme of consumerism. It is individualism raised to a new plane. The eclecticism of the New Age is not just a matter of being tolerant of behavioural differences or of supposing that we all have an equal right to act as we wish provided that it does not harm others. It goes farther than that to suppose not only that we can all discern the truth, but that what we all variously discern is all true. The individual consumer is not only the final arbiter of what he or she wants to believe and practise but also the final arbiter of truth and falsity. It is individualism taken to the level of epistemology, so that in the place of the sectarian arguments over which revelation best embodied the one truth, there is complete relativism.[49]

The problem is precisely that this solution to the problem of cultural pluralism is the dissolution of truth.

The New Paradigm churches are quintessentially postmodern. While critics dismiss them as merely one version of the church growth movement, there is reason to think that they are a reaction against both denominational religion and church growth. According to Donald Miller, most New Paradigm churches are "self-consciously hostile to church growth techniques, demographic studies, and various how-to manuals."[50] They are convinced that what they do is a work of the Holy Spirit. They reject moral and biblical relativism. They explicitly call members to live according to the New Testament ethic of Jesus. They even reject, in principle, the therapeutic culture of modernity. On the other hand, according to Miller, the New Paradigm churches also embody many elements of postmodern culture (especially in the contemporary, experiential music of worship), so that it cannot be said that they are truly a reinvigoration of Protestantism so much as a reinvention of Protestantism. "The distinctiveness of new paradigm churches, then, is that they have incorporated aspects of therapeutic, individualistic, and anti-establishment values into congregational life," asserts Miller, "but they have simultaneously rejected the narcissism of these countercultural orientations."[51] The New Paradigm churches exist because of modernity even as they react against modernity.

Nowhere is modernity more apparent in the success of New Paradigm Christianity than in what Miller calls its success in having "democratized the sacred, making it available to all, regardless of their theological education and training."[52] Where New Age spirituality leaves practitioners free to believe anything, the New Paradigm movement grounds its teachings in the absolute truthfulness of the Bible. At first glance, this contradicts the pluralizing tendencies that dominate modernity. And yet, there is a distinct ambiguity about what the Bible teaches, in the traditional sense of doctrinal confessions. The emphasis for New Paradigm Christians is on individual study and experiential appropriation of biblical insights. The conviction is that the Bible is transparent and contains self-evident truths. Highly trained clergy are not necessary. All that is required is personal interaction between the reader and the author/subject (God) of the Bible. Hermeneutical questions are as irrelevant as they would be to a husband and wife exchanging written love-notes. The end result is that the church is totally reconstructed to serve the needs of individuals, even though ostensibly the individuals being served are called to renounce narcissism. Miller's conclusion is simple:

> Shopping for a religion may sound commercial, but the upshot of this expression of individuality is that churches that are not meeting people's needs will fail and new upstart churches that are filling a need will prosper.[53]

Taking a cue from Marshall McLuhan, Miller appraises the growing irrelevance of mainline churches: "Many of these churches are culturally out of step, having failed to modernize the medium for their message."[54]

Summarizing the disposition of "god-talk" in America today, Phyllis Tickle identifies two major axioms: "an unflinching tolerance for what others revere" and a "conviction that private faith . . . must find corporate expression and communal exercise to be real." The second conviction, perhaps surprising for many critics of modernity, is the key to distinctively postmodern spirituality. There is hunger for community, but that hunger is shaped by the ethic of civility.

IMMANENT CRITIQUE AND THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

The difficulties that adhere to maintenance of historic Christianity in the postmodern world are now clear. Traditionalists, whether they want to admit it or not, must *choose* to be traditional and also must persuade others to value their tradition. In so doing, they must relocate tradition in plausibility structures that differ from those in which their traditions were created, if for no other reason than that the postmodern situation alone compels this choosing from a seemingly inexhaustible smorgasbord of preferences.

The root of the problem is that tradition *as tradition* can only reproduce itself if it does so *spontaneously.* The essence of tradition is that it is unconscious and that it shapes behavior at the level of presuppositions. Yet, according to David Gross, "one of the consequences of modernity is that the connection between the need to feel anchored or at home and the availability of tradition to satisfy this need, has been broken."[56] When tradition is called into question, as it is in the modern world, one may re-establish it only by relocating it within new plausibility structures, structures drawn, of necessity, from the modern world itself. Tradition is recontextualized, if it survives at all. Writes sociologist Anthony Giddens:

The conviction is that the Bible is transparent and contains self-evident truths. Highly trained clergy are not necessary.

> Tradition is marked by the highest degree of stability when it is not understood by its practitioners to *be* tradition, but simply "how things are done." Thus, a characteristic of modernity is not so much that tradition disappears completely as that it comes to be grounded more thoroughly in rationally defensible purposes.[57]

On the surface, a modern tradition may look unchanged from the premodern tradition, yet its plausibility in the modern world is sustained by a fundamentally different cultural system with an entirely different internal logic. Indeed, because one must *choose* to be traditional, contends Giddens, "no one today can but be conscious that living according to the precepts of a determined faith is one choice among other possibilities."[58]

Modern consciousness, claims Peter Berger, "entails a movement from fate to choice." Specifically, "modernity creates a new situation in which picking and choosing becomes an imperative."[59] The religious person cannot escape this imperative but must decide what to believe, even if it is only to affirm that which

is traditional. The effect is precisely to individualize religion, even among traditionalists. The irony is that even as tradition has become conscious, the forces of modernity that shape individuals remain unconscious. Most individuals who easily forsake traditional values, under the critical scrutiny of modernity, are only dimly aware (if at all) of the powerful mass consumer culture that shepherds them through the numerous decisions of everyday life. People are not nearly as free as they suppose themselves to be.

It is Erasmus, rather than Luther, who anticipates the calm, measured and inductive analysis of the modern scientific method.

One might observe that the powerful relativizing effects of modernity and its impact on traditional theological argument were apparent already at the time of Luther's debate with the Renaissance humanist Erasmus in 1524-1525. Many scholars have noted the medieval scholastic elements in Luther's mindset.[60] It is Erasmus, rather than Luther, who anticipates the calm, measured and inductive analysis of the modern scientific method. It is Erasmus, rather than Luther, who seems distinctively modern when he writes: "What am I to do when many bring diverse interpretations, about which each swears he has the Holy Spirit?" It is Erasmus, rather than Luther, who models the ethic of civility:

> So let us pursue the matter without recrimination, because this is more fitting for Christian men, and because in this way the truth, which is so often lost amid too much wrangling, may be most surely perceived . . .
>
> Moreover, I prefer this disposition of mine to that with which I see some people endowed who are so uncontrollably attached to their own opinion that they cannot bear anything which dissents from it; but they twist whatever they read in the Scriptures into an assertion of an opinion which they have embraced once for all . . . .
>
> For even though I believe myself to have mastered Luther's arguments, yet I might well be mistaken, and for that reason I play the debater, not the judge; the inquirer, not the dogmatist: ready to learn from anyone if anything truer or more scholarly can be brought.[61]

It is Erasmus, more than Luther, who prefigures the modern mind.

And yet, Luther's reforms benefitted from the humanists and Luther contributed to early modern cultural revolution. Luther, after all, labored to provide a vernacular Scripture by which individual believers decided for themselves what Scripture taught. He taught the priesthood of all believers and created a discursive field in which individual believers were accountable for their responses to the Reformation and its liberated gospel. Luther also affirmed the role of the Christian princes as they stood in judgment on doctrine. In short, it can be argued that there were many ways in which Luther accommodated the emerging lay culture of early modern Europe in spite of his distaste for many of its philosophical and theological principles. There is no easy, unambiguous model in Luther himself for the dilemma of our relationship with modernity.

Gross argues that traditionalists must come to grips with the irreversible structural changes wrought by modernity:

> Ironically, though traditionalism is based on a rejection of modernity, it can come into being only *within* modernity. Traditionalism makes no sense otherwise. Defining itself exclusively in relation to what it opposes, traditionalism is modernity's negative side, and as such cannot clearly separate itself from what it repudiates. Moreover, if a forced restoration of tradition were to come about, the help of a powerful, centralized state would be essential, since it is unlikely that old values or practices could be recycled without some amount of institutional coercion. But the contemporary bureaucratic state, itself a product of modernity, could be counted on to serve antimodern ends.[62]

The ecclesiastical parallel to such state imposed restoration of tradition is any repristination of Christian practice that uses modern bureaucratic power structures within the church to implement it. Modernity inexorably complicates any appeal to the past. Appeals for return to historic Christianity nearly always either explicitly or implicitly presume that modernity can be escaped.

Gross thinks that what is needed, instead of the dangerous linkage between traditionalism and modern bureaucratic power agendas, is an immanent critique of modernity. This critique would involve "a recuperation of exactly those traditions that have been dismissed, censured, occluded, marginalized, surpassed, or suppressed." The purpose of this recuperation is not "to increase social cohesion or promote a *restitutio in integrum*, but in order to acquire a vantage point on modernity based on what modernity has banished or repressed." In this way, according to Gross, "the critical importance of tradition may now lie in its apparent obsolescence."[63] That is, precisely in what modernity has relativized and marginalized lies the potential for radical critique. According to Gross, "instead of rejecting the world-as-it-is, an immanent critique chooses to work with and through its very inadequacies."[64] Such a critique does not reject modernity or seek to replace it with something else. Its purpose is not to escape modernity but to live intelligibly within it.

In an immanent critique, the forces of modernity are turned on their head. Yes, modernity relativizes traditions and people now must choose what to believe. No longer are religious beliefs, for instance, a part of the taken-for-granted structures of life. Yet, as Gross points out, this inevitability can serve the deeper spiritual purpose of religious commitment:

> To be sure, there is something problematic about the notion of *choosing* to become involved in a tradition. By intentionally joining a tradition instead of merely being born into one,

> the modern individual finds himself very far removed from those periods in the past when being in a tradition was simply taken for granted. . . . We have been permanently driven out of such a condition of naiveté by the forces of modernity. There is no way to reverse what has happened historically, nor would it even be desirable to go back to the way things were. Yet ironically there is a gain in this loss, for to choose to adhere to a tradition, and to remain consciously and willfully committed to it, may represent something qualitatively higher than merely being in a tradition by accident.[65]

What Gross suggests is that Christians make virtue of the vice they decry. Modernity requires choice, but even this apparent choosing can become part of an immanent critique of modernity (and I write "apparent" because so much does in fact go on of which those who choose are truly unaware, including that choosing which Scripture attributes to God).

Confessional Lutherans can continue to condemn the choosing of postmodern culture or they can focus on ways to participate in an immanent critique of modernity. Within such a critique, the Scripture once again would have its own distinctive voice because the other voices so prominent in secular culture would no longer be privileged by modern plausibility structures or institutions of power. We must not abandon traditional language and theology, but we do have to be careful how we present these treasures to a culture that generally does not comprehend them. Since the postmodern culture will no longer provide the plausibility for us, we must not only proclaim our tradition but also teach its plausibility. This will require a new apologetic for Confessional Lutheranism.

The apologetic task I suggest is not the Enlightenment's vision of a rational defense of Christian truth. It is closer to that task undertaken by the apologists of the early church, in which the message of Scripture was presented to Greco-Roman culture in its own terms. It is a task somewhat like that described by Helmut Thielicke (*The Evangelical Faith*) as a "theology of actualization" rather than a "theology of accommodation." A theology of actualization consists of a new interpretation of truth in which the individual is still confronted by and accountable to God, rather than allowing the individual to control the process as in a theology of accommodation.

We might observe that the cultural structures of premodernity did not always create ideal circumstances for Christian faith either. The task of the church in every age is both to use the resources of the culture, so as to be intelligible, as well as to critique the culture, so as not merely to be reduced to an instrument of the culture itself. This task, aptly described as the problematic of "Christ and culture," has been with the church since its inception.

Pastors also need to help their parishioners understand how the church has, in fact, thrived in cultures hostile to Christianity, and that we can go about our daily work as "aliens and strangers on earth" (Heb 11:13) with civility and without compromising our truth claims. Peter seems to envision this when he writes:

> But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander (1 Pt 3:15–16).

Experienced pastors realize that inflammatory rhetoric these days more often serves to attract troublesome personalities than to accomplish the defense of historic Christianity. We must discover how to be civil without succumbing to the "religion of civility."

One advantage of adopting Gross's immanent critique of modernity is that it could help to manage the ethic of civility. Like modernity, the ethic of civility may not be escaped, but it can be critiqued. The challenge for Christians is to exercise only that civility which will gain a hearing without succumbing to that civility which entails compromise, so that those who hear will engage substantially the truth of Christianity. If the problem of modernity is the religion of civility then the challenge of immanent critique is the creation of true civility. As Stephen Carter suggests in his book, *Civility*, we need an etiquette of respect to "discipline our desires for the sake of others." For such an etiquette, Carter thinks, there is a role for traditional Christianity, since "the reconstruction of civility . . . needs religions willing to challenge the faithful to adopt values different from those of the larger political and market cultures that are drowning democracy."[66] This is easier said than done precisely because it is necessary both that this Christian witness is civil enough to be heard and challenging enough to make a difference.

Modernity requires choice, but even this apparent choosing can become part of an immanent critique of modernity

The biggest threat to true civility, Carter points out, is the unwillingness to listen to those with whom we disagree: "the student of civility must concede that a belief in one's possession of the truth can lead to a disrespect for fellow citizens who disagree."[67] This is true whether such a person is religious or an advocate of some secular cause (including the ethic of civility!). "All too often," Carter maintains,

> we enter dialogue with our opponents by listening with our mouths rather than our ears; that is, we listen only for the flaws, awaiting our chance to refute. We do not listen to this living, breathing specimen of God's creation with any sense of awe; we do not even listen with any sense of respect.[68]

When we begin with such an antagonistic attitude, it is nearly impossible to develop a relationship in which one can be heard. I once listened in shock as Michael Savage, radio host of *The Savage Nation*, literally demolished a relatively nontoxic caller (calling him an "idiot" and demeaning his mother, of all things). Even when the

logic of such demolition is sound, continued reliance upon such tactics by conservatives will only harden the incivility of our culture and make it difficult for people to change the very values we want them to reconsider. Overall, the radio and TV adversary shows, with their sound-bite approach to complex social issues, do more harm than good. As Carter put it, "these programs are not so much uncivil as uncivilized."[69] The same mentality can easily enter the church, where it is equally destructive.

Militant traditionalism in the modern world is nearly always isolationist in effect. While isolation (separation) may be the most effective strategy of resistance to the modern world, it usually creates only a small band of isolated resisters (like the Amish). If we wish to address our culture and its shapers, we must adopt some basic elements of the ethic of civility. This means that, under most circumstances, we must temper our rhetoric and fortify our patience, simply to be heard. In the postmodern world, those who harangue are literally tuned out.

While the early church attempted to speak clearly and without compromise, it developed avenues of dialogue with its intellectual opponents.

We have much to learn from the early church, which also lived in a hostile culture. While the early church attempted to speak clearly and without compromise, it developed avenues of dialogue with its intellectual opponents. Many of the early apologists operated with civility within Greco-Roman culture. When Athenagoras of Athens engaged the Roman civil religion with critical respect rather than intolerant hostility, he provided an alternate vision of civic culture and a foundation for its eventual transformation. The result was not compromise but cultural change, according to Robert Wilken:

> At the same time, one observes again and again that Christian thinking, while working within patterns of thought and conceptions rooted in Greco-Roman culture, transformed them so profoundly that in the end something quite new came into being.[70]

What resulted, Wilken concluded, was not so much the "Hellenization of Christianity" as the "Christianization of Hellenism."[71]

Proclamation of law and gospel also will continue to be a high priority in a generation hungry for meaning when sermons often reduce it merely to therapeutic manipulation. However, such preaching dare not be reduced to lectures about doctrine nor even lectures about Jesus. Only a profound grasp of Luther's insight that "God is the kind of Lord who does nothing but . . . break what is whole and make whole what is broken"[72] can rescue Lutheran preaching from its rather pitiful state and bring it into creative dialogue with the needs of postmodern culture. Only preaching that "kills and makes alive again"[73] both addresses and embraces human experience so that it can be immanently critiqued. The purpose of such preaching is, first, to gain a hearing without compromise, which requires extraordinarily diligent and skillful preparation; secondly, to bring into consciousness, and ultimately to repentance, the narcissistic forces of modernity; and thirdly, to develop especially the deeper awareness of the divine purpose, the divine choosing. This preaching incorporates an understanding of Hebrews 4:12–16, where although the living and active word of God judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart, we approach the throne of grace with confidence because we have such a great high priest. The goal of this preaching is to live the paradoxical wisdom of the Pauline exhortation: "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil 2:12b–13).

Finally, we must pursue consciously the recreation of a *community* in which historic Christianity is plausible. Postmoderns are becoming increasingly critical of the narcissism of modernity but seem incapable of acting in accordance with their instincts. The church as Body of Christ can be more than a metaphor that we dredge from the pages of the Bible. It needs to become once again a living reality in the experience of a culture that yearns for it. We need to reexamine our practice of sacramental worship, Christian education, and service (*diakonia*) from the standpoint of the community of faith. Both Modernists and Evangelicals tend to view these as vehicles of spiritual experience that are offered to Christian consumers; both tend to presume the individualistic presuppositions of our modern market-based culture[74] (although the New Paradigm churches are beginning to take note of the increasing postmodern desire for community). With such presuppositions, accommodation to modernity is inevitable.

While Confessional Lutherans are rightly concerned about the postmodern obsession with experiential learning, there is a phenomenological sense in which life *is* experience. Luther also recognized this when he wrote in commentary on *The Magnificat* that a correct understanding of God and His word cannot be received from the Holy Spirit "without experiencing, proving and feeling it." "In such experience," Luther wrote, "the Holy Spirit instructs us as in His own school, outside of which nothing is learned but empty words and prattle."[75] The question is: what kind of experience will we focus on? For Luther, it was a theology of suffering and the cross as contrasted with a theology of glory:

> He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross . . . . A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.[76]

Our postmodern culture needs a community in which it can learn such wisdom now more than ever, as people struggle to live honestly with the world as it is (including a stock market that no longer just keeps going up!).

Lutheranism will only survive with integrity so long as it can create a community of faith that is capable of standing in self-conscious tension with culture. This cannot and must not be understood as *anti*cultural, but it can and must be understood as *critical* of culture. However integral culture may be to our encounter with the truth claims of Christianity, those truth claims simply cannot be reduced to culture. While I generally consider myself both a political and theological conservative, Lutherans who wish to conserve our Confessional heritage need to be cautioned that there are dangers implicit in traditional American civil religion. In particular, uncritical identification with the so-called New Christian Right will exchange our Confessional birthright for a mess of cultural pottage as surely as the Modernist accommodation of the liberal or Leftist movements we conservatives so frequently criticize.

American culture is in crisis. Whether the issues are secular or religious, American culture is in crisis. Confessional Lutherans need to view this crisis as an opportunity for a sympathetic critique of modernity, sympathetic to the situation faced by postmoderns, but critical of the solutions that modernity proposes for its own problems. Confessional Lutherans need to cultivate a spirit of openness to dialogue (and not merely argument) with the many Americans who disagree with them; otherwise we will simply forfeit numerous opportunities for evangelical outreach. I have always appreciated the late Francis Schaeffer's apologetic principle: honest answers for honest questions. Pugnacious defensiveness about our postmodern situation is counterproductive. At the same time, we must lovingly probe the self-consciousness of those who join our congregations. We cannot let people rest secure in the easy avenues of resistance or accommodation to modern culture, although this must happen in dialogical relationship. Preaching and teaching of the Scripture needs to create that intellectual humility which has always characterized authentic faith in the presence of God's word. For, in reality, both Modernist accommodation and Fundamentalist resistance reflect an arrogantly modern *self*-confidence.

Can the parish pastor actually accomplish such an ambitious agenda? Not if the pastor has subscribed to the notion that pastoral ministry in the modern world consists of competence at *many* things (to meet the "needs" of many different religious consumers!). In pursuit of omnicompetence, the pastor and the church become defined bureaucratically by modernity. But if the pastor accepts that there is, finally, "one thing" that matters most (Lk 10:41), and that attention to that *one* thing is the key to the vitality of Confessional Lutheranism, it *can* be done.

NOTES

1. See John Shotter, *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life: Social Constructionism, Rhetoric and Knowing of the Third Kind* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 34; also Jim Powell, *Postmodernism for Beginners* (Village Station, NY: Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc., 1998), 107.

2. John Stephens (*The Italian Renaissance: The Origins of Intellectual and Artistic Change Before the Reformation* [New York, NY: Longman, 1990]) views the emerging lay culture of the Renaissance as the engine of modernity. However, Elizabeth Eisenstein (*The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* [New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, (1979) 1991]) documents the importance of critical communities enabled by typographical fixity and the widespread distribution of books. Robert Wuthnow (*Communities of Discourse: Ideology and Social Structure in the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and European Socialism* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989]) points to early modern commercial expansion with the resulting autonomy of regime structures, in that this provided significant resources for humanist discourse to challenge traditional religious and political elites. Jürgen Habermas (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence [Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, (1962) 2000]) emphasizes the emergence of the secularized public sphere.

3. Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 10–11.

4. Habermas, 11–12.

5. Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation, The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, [1966] 1977), 338.

6. A. N. Wilson, *God's Funeral* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 46.

7. Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 34.

8. See David R. Liefeld, "The Responsibility to Teach: Is It Rightfully Assumed by the Modern Nation-State?" *Lutheran Education* 137:4 (Summer 2002): 287.

9. See Habermas, 161.

10. Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 4.

11. See Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 111. See also Loren Baritz, *The Good Life: The Meaning of Success for the American Middle Class* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).

12. Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1964] 1967), 26. See also Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 47.

13. Marx, 228.

14. See Kammen, 8.

15. See George Cotkin, *Reluctant Modernism: American Thought and Culture 1880–1900* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), xiii; also Paul Conkin, *The Uneasy Center: Reformed Christianity in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), ix.

16. Timothy Walch, "Introduction," *Immigrant America: European Ethnicity in the United States,* ed. Timothy Walch (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994), ix.

17. The entry from Emerson is quoted in: Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 95.

18. Philip Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 275.

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Ministry to Recovering Secularists

Challenges and Opportunities for the Lutheran Church after Postmodernism

Paul T. McCain

Just when we had seen and heard enough about terrorism, violence, death and destruction, and soon after television news shows had stopped replaying for the ten-thousandth time the sight of two commercial jets smashing into the World Trade Center in New York, we witnessed on television, live and in person, footage from the war in Iraq. We watched with a mixture of fascination and horror as American and British troops killed and destroyed a regime that was so ruthless, cruel and brutal that even liberal media expressed shock and awe.

All these things have taken place at the start of the third millennium. We were lulled by the collapse of the Iron Curtain into thinking that perhaps we were finally entering that long-promised and much hoped for utopia of worldwide peace and harmony among all nations, even though more people were slaughtered in warfare during the past one hundred years than in all prior centuries of human history combined. Perhaps, many in our society thought, finally we are seeing the birth of the much anticipated new world order in which advanced and cultured peoples would bring their high-tech cultures and insights to benighted and backward third-world countries. Even postmodernism, the philosophy *de jeur* that has been so helpful to us in understanding the trends in culture and society seems to be on its way out. Despairing of progress, many turned to a position that truth finally is entirely relative and unknown and unknowable. Indeed, we are in post-postmodern times.

Foolish and naive views of reality crumbled and fell along with the World Trade Center Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. We realize now, more than ever before, that the times truly are changing, and have changed. The change that has come is not what we were expecting. Now instead of being so sure of the answers, or so sure that there are no answers, we seem to have only questions. Why does the world not realize that our ways, our values, our western and American traditions are good for them? Why do some people actually hate us? Why are there people who are seeking opportunities to kill and murder us? What is going on? While western skeptics seem willing to embrace a "truth is relative" view, increasingly in the world that is a minority viewpoint.

Something seems to have gone wrong, but a positive development has risen from all of this. People today are grappling with "ultimate questions" more so than in the past. The United States president speaks openly about evil, and most Americans agree, passionately. Many are waking up from the sleepy fog of self-deception they imposed on themselves. We live among recovering secularists—people who thought they had things figured out. Secularists thought tolerance and non-judgmental values would make the world better. They believed religion, doctrine, dogma and the like, were relics of a bygone day. They ran ahead with all their scientific, technological and economic progress, wrapped in an oh-so-polite diffidence toward ultimate truth.

It is as if we are now standing at the confluence of many streams that produce a torrential river of change, uncertainty, doubt, fear, worry and profound confusion. People handle these realities in different ways. Some try to ignore it and are hopeful that it will just go away. The church is certainly not immune from these pressures; no, quite the opposite. We find that many approach these challenges, eager to compromise and let the raging currents, dilute and finally drown what it is that we as Lutherans actually believe, teach, and confess.

This is a moment of incredible opportunity for the Lutheran church. It is a moment for absolute clarity of confession and proclamation of truth, in all its glorious specificity. It is a time for our Lutheran church to proclaim very clearly and very boldly what it means to be a Lutheran Christian. Vague generalities and talk of vision, mission and message, without absolutely specific proclamation of our Lutheran Confessions and identity, is not only dangerous, it is counterproductive from a secular point of view. The most recent data and research on belief in America demonstrate this.

We find ourselves at a unique point in history. We need to assess where we are, understanding what trends and circumstances impact the church's ministry and work in this confusing and oftentimes chaotic world in which we life. When we understand the nature of the raging river we are on, we will be able to secure ourselves in that strong and sturdy boat that will get us through: the word of God and our Lutheran Confessions. By God's blessing, and with his help, we may even enjoy the ride as we rest in the unchanging word of the Lord, which endures forever.

RECOVERING SECULARISTS: WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND HE IS US

The March 2003 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* featured an editorial by David Brooks titled, "Kicking the Secularist Habit."[1] It is a fascinating article that opens a window on a world that few of us know. Brooks writes, "Like a lot of people these days, I'm a recovering secularist. Until September 11, I accepted the notion that as

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the world becomes richer and better educated, it becomes less religious." A secularist therefore would be a person who looks at religion as something for people who are unsophisticated, uneducated and generally out of touch with reality. Secularists believe that all things in this world can be explained without recourse to notions of God or divine order. There should certainly be no discussing sin and evil as actual realities. For the secularist these are just shades of human opinion.

Brooks realized that in fact just the opposite seems to be true. We live in an age of booming spirituality (not necessarily Christianity, and that is important to keep in mind). He says we are in the midst of a "religious boom." Islam is growing. Young Jews are embracing Judaism. Christianity is the world's fastest growing religion, particularly on the continent of Africa.

"Secularism is not the future; it is yesterday's incorrect vision of the future. . . ."

Then he makes a fascinating point. "It is the denominations that refuse to adapt to secularism that are growing the fastest, while those that try to be 'modern' and 'relevant' are withering." In Africa, Christianity has grown from 10 million in 1900 to 360 million, with conservative evangelical groups growing the most quickly. He concludes,

> Secularism is not the future; it is yesterday's incorrect vision of the future. This realization sends us recovering secularists to the bookstore or the library in a desperate attempt to figure out what is going on.

Brooks outlines a six-step recovery for secularists. He says that secularists first have to accept the fact that they are not the norm.

> Religious groups should be sending out researchers to try to understand why there are pockets of people in the world who do not feel the constant presence of God in their lives . . . who do not believe that God's will should shape their lives.

Brooks says that once you accept the reality that secularism is far and away a minority opinion in the world, which he compares to finally understanding that the sun does not revolve around the earth, you are ready to look at things in a new way.

Second, recovering secularists must confront fear. Everyone wants to believe that we are headed toward an ever-increasingly positive history. People were lulled into believing that freedom and democracy are unstoppable forces and the world will keep getting better. Now there is every indication that the future will be marked by just the opposite: increasing conflict, turmoil and fear.

Third, he advises recovering secularists to get angry. Brooks is "annoyed by the secular fundamentalists who are content to remain smugly ignorant of enormous shifts occurring all around them." He says that a "great Niagara of religious fervor is cascading down around them while they stand obtuse and dry in the little cave of their own parochialism." Let's apply this comment to the Lutheran church. Are we perhaps in our own little parochial caves? Do we think that we can simply overlook, ignore or neglect the profoundly fundamental differences within Christianity? Is our church willing to serve up a watered-down version of our Lutheran confession, believing that we must do so to avoid giving offense, thinking this is the key to being effective? Current trends suggest something different.

Fourth, Brooks says that recovering secularists must resist the temptation to find "a materialistic explanation for everything." He explains how human beings yearn for "righteous rule, for a just world, or a world that reflects God's will—in many cases as strongly as they yearn for money and success." It seems that more and more of the forty and fifty-somethings among us are realizing that life in the fast lane is not all it is cracked up to be, or better put, results more often than not in a life cracked and marred by self-absorption and loneliness.

Fifth, "the recovering secularist must acknowledge that he has been too easy on religion." Here is a particularly fascinating point for us. Brooks explains that in dismissing religion, secularists gloss over differences among them. Let me ask this question, could it be that we fall into the same trap as well when we are so quick to dismiss key differences amongst Christians? Are we too eager to throw overboard the very things that mark us as uniquely and authentically Lutheran? Brooks explains that the secularist

> condescendingly decided not to judge other creeds. They are all valid ways of approaching God, he told himself, and ultimately they fuse into one. After all, why stir up trouble by judging another's beliefs? It's not polite. The better option, when confronted by some nasty practice performed in the name of religion, is simply to avert one's eyes.

He says that this approach is no longer acceptable. He says that we must in fact distinguish right from wrong.

Sixth, Brooks says that recovering secularists have to come to terms with the fact that this country was never very secular to begin with. We believe this nation will lead others to the same values and freedoms we cherish. This is not the same vision embraced by others in the world and we would be foolish to assume that it is. However, Brooks concludes, "understanding this world means beating the secularist prejudices out of our minds every day."

Now, how are we like these recovering secularists? That might seem to be a strange question, but I would put to you the proposition that in a rather strange way we are tempted to do the same thing secularists do when it comes to our identity as an authentic Lutheran church. We too find ourselves at times covering our eyes and dismissing realities around us. We want to overlook controversy; either pretending it does not exist or is not important. That is wrong on both counts. As church, we need to shed our "secularist habits" as we look to the future and identify the opportunities and challenges as we move into the third millennium. As we minister to recovering secularists, we need to understand the large challenge in front of us.

BEDEVILING DETAILS

Figures lie and liars figure, right? Or, put another way, the devil is in the details. On the face of it we might be lulled into thinking that we have, basically, a strongly Christian nation. We turn to some sobering realities about the state of Christianity in this nation and world religion in general. In 2002 there was no noticeable change in seven key religious behaviors, as tracked by Barna Research, an organization specializing in the study of Christianity and belief. According to Barna, 1996 was "perhaps the spiritual low point of the nation during the past decade and a half."[2]

- 57 percent of Americans do not attend church in a typical week. This figure has not really moved much at all, either up or down, since 1992. The low point of non-attendance was in 1996 with 63 percent of Americans reporting they do not regularly attend a church.
- 58 percent of Americans indicate that they do not read the Bible in a typical week, the highest figure since the 1990s.
- 75 percent of Americans report that they do not attend an Adult Bible study or Sunday school class.

Moving from what Barna calls "religious behaviors" to "religious beliefs" we find an interesting contradiction between what is claimed to be believed and then resultant practices. For instance:

- Only half of the people who claim to be Christians would claim to be "absolutely committed" to Christianity.
- 60 percent of the people did not strongly believe Jesus was sinless.
- 66 percent did not strongly disagree with the statement that Satan is just a symbol for evil.
- Only 21 percent of Lutherans accept the fundamental Reformation belief that man does not earn his way to heaven through good works.

The most controversial aspect of Barna's latest research findings, which has not received the attention it deserves, are his concluding remarks. We need to hear him out, and filter the language that grates a bit on our Lutheran ears, but there is much wisdom in what George Barna has to say:

> Boomers wanted nothing to do with institutional religion and generally felt that Christians were hypocrites. Today, Boomers are half of the born-again population. You have to wonder what caused such a massive turnaround. It was not simply because they had children and wanted their offspring to have religious training. After pouring over numerous national studies we have conducted since the early 1980s, I believe that the issue is the way in which we have proposed Christianity to the Boomer generation. At heart, Boomers are consumers. The way we presented Christ to most Boomers struck a resonant chord with them from that mindset. We told them all they had to do was say a prayer admitting they made some mistakes, they are sorry and they want to be forgiven. Boomers weigh the downside—which really amounted to nothing more than a one-time admission of imperfection and weakness in return for permanent peace with God—and figured it was a no-brainer, a can't-lose transaction. The consequence has been millions of Boomers who said the prayer, asked for forgiveness and went on with their life, with virtually nothing changed. Sadly, they misunderstand the heart of the matter. They saw it as a deal in which they could exploit God and get what they wanted without giving up anything of consequence. But very few American Christians have experienced a sense of spiritual brokenness that compelled them to beg God for his mercy and acceptance through the love of Christ. We have a nation of "Christians" who took the best offer, but relatively few who were so humbled and hopeless before a holy and omnipotent God that they cried out for undeserved compassion. That helps to explain why in practical terms it's hard to tell the difference between those who have beliefs that characterize them as born again and those who don't. The difference between the two groups is based on semantics more than a desperate plea for grace that triggered an intentional effort to live a transformed life.[3]

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We face a very serious situation in this country when it comes to authentic Christian belief. We are moving into a post-postmodernism and the church will be slow to catch up to these realities. Some in fact may not even be willing to confront them, choosing instead to rely on old, hackneyed formulas from days gone by when the Church Growth Movement was considered the key to success.

There are many people who claim to be religious, even Christian, but who are really Christians in name only. There is tremendous diversity of belief. In the *mainline* denominations, Christianity is far from the biblical faith of their fathers and grandfathers. It is increasingly a mixture of liberal theology and a contemporary stew of various spiritualities and beliefs. The solution is precisely to challenge denominational ambiguity and not to embrace evangelism and mission efforts that appeal to the least common denominator.

BEING AND REMAINING AUTHENTICALLY AND GENUINELY LUTHERAN

A report was released in the fall of 2002 by an organization that conducts a scientific statistical analysis of American religious affiliation every ten years. It was not a study conducted by a conservative think-tank, but instead, by the Glenmary Research Center, a Roman Catholic group. The Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies sponsored the study. The results of the study shocked the project director. *The New York Times,* one

of the largest and most liberal of the nation's newspapers, widely respected and considered by many to be the *paper of record* for our society, reported the incredulous response of Ken Sanchagrin, director of the Glenmary Research Center.

> I was astounded to see that by and large the growing churches are those that we ordinarily call conservative. And when I looked at those that were most declining, most were moderate or liberal churches. And the more liberal the denomination, by most people's definition, the more they were losing.[4]

That study showed, as many others have as well, that conservative churches grow, while liberal churches are declining. "Liberal theology brings spiritual malaise and membership stagnation almost everywhere it is tried," was the comment made by one leader of the study. He went on to say, "Liberal theology, with its de-emphasis on traditional Christian belief in favor of social activism is committing demographic suicide. The future of Christianity belongs to robust orthodoxy."[5] The New York Times article leads with the sentence, "Socially conservative churches that demand high commitment from their members grew faster than other religious denominations in the last decade."

The study indicates it is demographic suicide for a church to water down its unique identity and confessional position.

Every mainline protestant denomination analyzed for the past ten years shows growing declines in membership. The Methodists lost 6.7 percent of their membership; the Presbyterian Church USA lost 11.6 percent; the Disciples of Christ lost 2 percent; the United Church of Christ lost nearly 15 percent; the Episcopal Church lost 5.3 percent; and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America lost 2 percent of its membership. At the same time the population of the United States of America's population grew by 13 percent. The only place these liberal mainline churches show growth is in more conservative areas of the country.

The churches that are growing are conservative churches. The more clearly they hold forth a distinct and unique confessional identity the greater is their growth. The Presbyterian Church in America has grown 42 percent, the Church of God, 40 percent. Roman Catholics have grown nearly 17 percent. The Assemblies of God have grown 18.5 percent.

There are some among us who would claim that the greatest challenge we face in the future is getting the gospel out, world mission, and so on and so forth. They are right, but have only a very bird's eye view level. It is important for us to be precise. What *gospel* are we passionate about giving out? What *love* is it that transforms people? What is our *mission* and our *message*? What precisely is the basis for our unity as a people of God known as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod? For that matter, does it matter? Does it matter if we are Lutheran? Do we still care enough about being Lutheran that we are willing to say, as did our fathers in the sixteenth-century Reformation, that we are actually willing to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and point to our Lutheran Confessions and say, "This and no other is the true explanation of what the word of God teaches?"

The study I previously cited indicates it is demographic suicide for a church to water down its unique identity and confessional position. Even from a purely human, business, crass and non-theological perspective, the suggestion that LCMS congregations should imitate Baptist or Evangelical churches is "demographic suicide." Of course there is an even more important reason to be and remain authentically, genuinely, discernibly and uniquely Lutheran. A church that wishes to remain truly a gospel-centered and Bible-based church is one that will be a Lutheran church. That strikes some ears as a radical statement. But usually those ears are ears that have been born and bred to the Lutheran faith, whereas those who come into our church from outside, as refugees from mainline or Evangelical churches, tell us this is precisely so.[6]

We need constantly to be asking those two important Lutheran questions. When you answer these, you have just about covered the waterfront of issues. When it comes to being authentically and genuinely Lutheran we must ask, "What does this mean?" and "How is this done?" Sound familiar? They should. They are the two most commonly asked questions in the Small Catechism.

What does it mean to be authentically and genuinely Lutheran? Simply put, it means that we are committed entirely, in mind, heart, and with our mouths, to the Lutheran Confessions that explain properly and purely what the Bible teaches. There are thousands of different opinions out there in the Christian world about the Bible, so we dare not suggest that merely agreeing that the Bible is the word of God is sufficient, nor is it sufficient to mention Jesus.

We need to return, ever and again, to the basics. Go home and pull that catechism off of your shelf. Read it and study it carefully. Do not stop there. Read Luther's Large Catechism, then, read the Augsburg Confession, and the entire Book of Concord, in which your very identity as an authentic Lutheran is presented. It is important. It makes a difference. It matters. Why? It matters because the gospel matters. And Lutheranism is all about the gospel, not just any "good news," but the authentic, genuine gospel of the Scriptures. That is, the good news that Jesus Christ, true God of God and Light of Light, was sent into this world, born of the Virgin Mary, to live perfectly according God's holy law, and then to suffer and die for our sins. His perfect righteousness, innocence and holiness are imputed to you and me by God as a free gift, by grace, through faith, which is itself a gift given and sustained through those means instituted by Christ himself: the word of the gospel as preached and taught to us, as proclaimed to us in holy absolution, through holy baptism in which we were buried with Christ in the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit and in the holy Lord's Supper in which we receive the body and blood shed on the cross, under the bread and wine. Through these means, and by his gracious presence through these means, our Lord is with us until the end of the ages.

It is a great temptation to our church to try to be like other churches. Ironically, those church bodies that try to conform themselves more closely to secular society are in decline. When the substance of church life becomes offering one emotional experience after another, the church becomes no different than any other form of entertainment available.

Those church bodies that try to conform themselves more closely to secular society are in decline.

We have a growing number of "recovering secularists" to whom we can minister powerfully. They are both within and without our church. These are people groping and grasping for something solid and substantial to build on. They do not want to be entertained, amused, or otherwise distracted from reality; they want solid, substantial spiritual nourishment. I say let's give it to them! Let's serve it up in hot, steaming plates of that rich food that was discovered again in the sixteenth-century Reformation by Luther and his companions. The Evangelical Lutheran Church, that is, the church reformed and renewed by God's grace through his servant Martin Luther, is the oldest continuing gospel movement in the history of the church. Shall we let it end with our generation? No, by God's grace, no! We can do better. We must do better. We will do better.

So many people are lost and searching. There are so many options that offer what appears to be relief and hope. The Lutheran Church offers what so many are looking for. The Lutheran Church proclaims the reality of our complete sinfulness before God, the fact that we are lost and condemned creatures, doomed to eternal damnation in hell is one that is able then to proclaim in all its sweetness and power the actual, liberating message that each sin you have committed, every thought, every word, every deed that has been contrary to the Holy God's will and law is entirely, completely, beyond a doubt, cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ shed for the world. That is the message that gives hope and life to a church and to a people of God. We do not water that down. We do not compromise it. Recovering secularists among us, and particularly that recovering secularist within each one us, need that truth, continually and desperately. It is this truth that will guide and sustain the Lutheran Church as she passes through yet another period of history, post-postmodernism.

NOTES

1. David Brooks,"Kicking the Secularist Habit," *Atlantic Monthly* 291, no. 2 (March 2003), 26–28.
2. "America's Religious Activity Has Increased Since 1996, But Its Beliefs Remain Virtually Unchanged," *Barna Research Online*, June 17, 2002. Data based on George Barna, *The State of the Church 2002* (http://www.barna.org).
3. Interview with George Barna in "America's Religious Activity Has Increased, but Beliefs Remain Virtually Unchanged," June 17, 2002; Barna Research Online (http://www.barna.org).
4. "Conservative Churches Grew Fastest in the 1990s, Report Says," Laurie Goodstein, *New York Times*, Wednesday, September 18, 2002.
5. "New Study Shows Conservative Churches Grow, Liberal Churches Declining," Meghan Furlong, October 2, 2002. From The Institute on Religion and Democracy (http:// www.ird-renew.org/news).
6. See Craig Parton's excellent and powerful description of how he searched for, and found, the pure gospel when he found confessional Lutheranism. *The Defense Never Rests: A Lawyer's Quest for the Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House), 2003.

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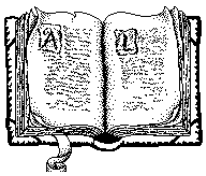

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Nietzsche On Christianity

A Baptismally Informed Analysis

Kent A. Heimbigner

Our Lord commanded baptism, saying to his disciples in the last chapter of Matthew: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."

The holy apostles of the Lord have written: "The promise is for you and your children," and: "Baptism now saves you."

We also learn from the word of God that we all are conceived and born sinful and are in need of forgiveness. We would be lost forever unless delivered from sin, death, and everlasting condemnation. But the Father of all mercy and grace has sent his Son Jesus Christ, who atoned for the sin of the whole world that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The words above, taken from a Lutheran baptismal liturgy, explicate the purpose of holy baptism. The minister speaks them immediately after the invocation. Jesus commands baptism, it "saves you" (hence it gives eternal life to the recipient), and it provides the necessary deliverance from the natural condition "conceived and born sinful."

Concerning baptism, Luther's *Small Catechism* offers this question and answer:

> *What does such baptizing with water indicate?*
>
> It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever (SC iv).

For Christians, especially Lutherans, the ideal life is the baptized life, in which one daily overcomes the concupiscent nature (the Old Adam) through contrition and repentance of all sins and evil desires. Thus, with God's help, a Christ-like (the new man) life is lived. In rejecting his Lutheran upbringing, Nietzsche also rejected the ideal of the baptized life.

One may understand much of Nietzsche's philosophy as his attempt to repudiate the faith into which he was baptized. This article provides a Lutheran Christian response to Nietzsche's challenge. It is divided into three main parts: The first section, *The Christ*, contrasts Nietzsche's picture of Jesus with the Scriptural record; the second section, *Thus Spake Jesus*, reflects upon the words of the Jesus of the Holy Scriptures, leading to a discussion of the nature of words themselves. Nietzsche challenges the reliability of words, (*Beyond Good and Evil,* 16), while orthodox Lutheran Christians believe God uses words miraculously as his chosen vehicles for revealing to humanity the way of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Yet how can Christendom respond, if it allows that the words upon which the faith is based serve inadequately as vehicles for communicating divine truth, and that biblical (Lutheran) anthropology is nothing but a temporal and "human, all-too-human" construct? This article thus notes the value of Nietzsche's criticisms for identifying weaknesses in theological formulation, particularly in its more liberal manifestations. Nietzsche, in a sense the most consistent liberal theologian, shows the church that her liberal theologians have already surrendered far too much to withstand a decent challenge from the philosophy department. The third and final section, entitled *Beyond Good and Bad*, addresses human nature. Calling for more life-affirming criteria for judging behavior, Nietzsche argues that the standard of "good and bad" serves better than the Christian standards of "good and evil." The critical consequence of Nietzsche's thought on morality has him believe that God, as attested to by the Judaeo-Christian tradition, is a human creation, invented by those possessed of slave morality. This essay asks which of these standards is more "life-affirming."

THE CHRIST

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6).

> It is indecent to be a Christian today . . . not one word has remained of what was formerly called "truth"; we can no longer stand it if a priest as much as uses the word "truth." . . . The priest too knows as well as anybody else that there is no longer any "God," any "sinner," any "Redeemer" . . . (Nietzsche, *Antichrist,* 38)

Nietzsche was raised Lutheran, and Lutheranism defines the Christianity that Nietzsche rejects. Lutheranism teaches that an eternal, beatific life awaits all believers in Christ after their lives in

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this world end. God the Father makes this eternal life available to "sinners" (in other words, all people) by grace, through the faith in God the Son (Jesus Christ). Clearly, this is a *truth* claim. Nietzsche rejects it point by point, as in the above quote. Instead, Nietzsche urges the living of life in such a way that one would be willing to return eternally to a given present moment. Such a life is willful, inevitably resulting in what Nietzsche refers to as "will to *power*."

For Nietzsche, truth is not only irrelevant, it is a mere illusion.

So one asks, how do truth and power interrelate? Is power a footnote to truth, or is truth a footnote to power? While Nietzsche eloquently identifies the issue, the conflict is not new. Consider the exchange between Jesus and Pilate on the day of the Lord's crucifixion:

> Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."
>
> "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.
>
> Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."
>
> "What is truth?" Pilate asked. With that, he went out again (Jn 18:36–38).

In the same context, Pilate asks Jesus, "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" Jesus answers, "You would have no power over me if it were not given you from above" (Jn 19:10–11). For Jesus and for Christianity, truth is *the* issue. What one should believe, how one should live, and what makes life meaningful are all finally issues of truth, and the central truth issues are the self-revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ, the truth of his testimony, and the truth of the "not of this world" kingdom of which Christ is king.

Nietzsche invites a "proto-Nietzschean" view of Pilate by echoing Pilate's question:

> What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins (*On Truth and Lie*).

For Pilate (and Nietzsche), truth is not the issue. Pilate's words, "What is truth?"constitute a statement in question form rather than a genuine inquiry. Truth is irrelevant. One *uses* truth to massage, manipulate, corrupt and falsify, so as to acquire and retain power. Nietzsche makes the same claims, and even more strongly. For Nietzsche, truth is not only irrelevant, it is a mere illusion. Judging from Pilate's position as a Roman governor, he apparently succeeded quite nicely and was rather life-affirming of himself. The implications of this issue for morality will receive consideration in the final section of this paper. For now, note that Jesus' words reveal what he taught concerning life and truth and the nature of his own mission and ministry.

Concerning Jesus' teachings about life and truth, one should clarify what is at stake. For Nietzsche, the issue is hardly important. He believes one should live in a manner that affirms life. One should at least balance rationality with the freedom to act on impulse, and one should live in the here-and-now, rather than negating this life for the sake of a hoped-for eternal reward. For Nietzsche, it does not matter whether he can use Jesus to endorse such views or not. "Life affirmation" is his philosophy, and he stands by it, with or without Jesus.

For the Christian, however, Jesus' teachings about life and truth (or anything else) are supremely important. Consider the cornerstone doctrinal statement of the Lutheran church:

> 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 (AC IV).

If Nietzsche (or anyone) could show that Christ was not God, or did not teach eternal life, or that his death did not atone for sin, Christianity as confessed by Lutheranism would fall. The Christian baptismal hope, the promise given in baptism of the complete restoration of the *imago dei*, that is, the return of fallen people to condition of full humanity, would be voided.

What did Nietzsche claim about Jesus? To begin, one must inquire about Nietzsche's estimation of the Christian Holy Scriptures. In tracing the history of "denaturing values" as one finds it in Israel, Nietzsche claims that this "denaturing" springs from a deception:

> The "will of God" (that is, the conditions for the preservation of priestly power) must be known: to this end a "revelation" is required. In plain language: a great literary forgery becomes necessary, a "holy scripture" is discovered; it is made public with full hieratic pomp, with days of repentance and cries of lamentation over the long "sin." The "will of God" had long been fixed: all misfortune rests on one's having become estranged from the "holy scripture" (*Antichrist,* 26).

Nietzsche believes no God inspired the Holy Scriptures. Further, he does not credit the human (priestly) authors with having the good of their non-priestly readers at heart. Priests produced Scripture to co-opt others into accepting a morality based in *ressentiment* (*On the Genealogy of Morals,* I, 16) and into subservience to the priestly class. Such a theory of the genesis of biblical material leads to the conclusion that one should hear every word of the Bible only with extreme skepticism. Nietzsche makes this principle explicit in his treatment of the New Testament Gospels:

> The Gospels are valuable as testimony to the irresistible corruption *within* the first community. What Paul later carried to its conclusion, with the logician's cynicism of a rabbi, was nevertheless nothing other than that process of decay which had begun with the death of the Redeemer. One cannot read these Gospels cautiously enough (*Antichrist,* 44).

And how does one go about reading the Gospels with adequate caution?

> What concerns *me* is the psychological type of the Redeemer. After all, this could be contained in the Gospels despite the Gospels, however mutilated and overloaded with alien features. . . . Not the truth concerning what he did, what he said, how he really died; but the question whether his type can still be exhibited at all, whether it has been "transmitted" (*Antichrist,* 29).

For Nietzsche, the hermeneutical technique for discovering the "real Jesus" amid all the inaccurate and deceptive passages in the Gospels is to *already know* what the "real Jesus" is like. Nietzsche thus picks and chooses which passages of the Gospels he accepts as reflecting the authentic "psychological type of the Redeemer," and dismisses the rest as hieratic mutilations. In the end, Nietzsche's Jesus is a figment of Nietzsche's imagination, nothing more.

Nietzsche's Jesus ends up looking a lot like Nietzsche: he taught no return at the end of time or "Last Judgment" (*Antichrist,* 31). He taught "a new way of life, *not* a new faith" (*Antichrist,* 33). He recognizes "only inner realities as realities;" he would not claim to be the "son of God;" for him the "'kingdom of heaven' is a state of the heart—not something that is to come 'above the earth' or 'after death'" (*Antichrist,* 34). Nietzsche's only critique of this Jesus is Jesus' egalitarianism, which negates heroism. Nietzsche believes that only an elite group may actually attain the status of nobility, while Jesus' "glad tidings" are offered to all.

Compare Nietzsche's Jesus now to the biblical record. According to that record, Jesus is "life-affirming." He says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10). He declares Peter's confession that He is the Son of God to be a revelation from God the Father (Mt 16:16–17). He prays,

> Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted Him authority over all people that He might give eternal life to all those You have given Him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (Jn 17:1b–3).

One would have to excise huge chunks of the Gospels to produce a Jesus devoid of a Last Judgment or eternal life in heaven. Arguably, Christian morality is more "life-affirming" in *this* life than Nietzsche's *"Beyond Good and Evil"* proposal. Eternal life remains the more important issue, however. If there is an eternal life, forfeiture of eternity for the sake of affirming one's life in this world would have to be adjudicated as life *negating* over all. As Jesus said, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" (Mt 16:26).

For Nietzsche, the hermeneutical technique for discovering the "real Jesus" amid all the inaccurate and deceptive passages in the Gospels is to* already know *what the "real Jesus" is like.

A further consequence of the dogma of eternal life is that it ennobles *this* life: Life in this world becomes more meaningful and richer precisely because of the eternal value of things done here. Add now the Lutheran Christian view of angelic guardianship (SC II) and divine favor in this life, and one has a glorious antidote to the nihilism that so concerns Nietzsche.

If, on the other hand, there is no eternal life, if instead there is only this life (albeit possibly eternally recurring), then being "life affirming" takes on an entirely different dynamic. Divergent presuppositions concerning the reality of eternal life leave Nietzscheans and Christians talking past each other when discussing what it means to be "life-affirming." Christ, according to his words in the Holy Scriptures, is "life-affirming," giving the resurrection of the body and eternal life to those who believe in Him (Mt 22:29–32; Jn 3:16; 11:25). For Nietzsche, the terminology of "life-affirmation" applies only to life in this world, and he re-creates Jesus in his own exclusively this-worldly image. Thus Nietzsche and the Christian come to an impasse.

THUS SPAKE JESUS

> *Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise"* (*Lk 23:43*).
>
> *There would be more justification for placing above the gateway to the Christian Paradise and its "eternal bliss" the inscription "I too was created by eternal* hate*"—provided the truth may be placed above the gateway to a lie!* (On the Genealogy of Morals, I, 15).

The very fact that Jesus answered, that he spoke, that he uttered words, leads to a consideration of the nature of His words. This is "the issue behind the issue" of the nature of Christ, His mission,

His ministry, and His teaching. For Lutheran (*sola scriptura*) Christians in particular, words spoken by God (whether by Christ himself or by his inspired servants) are true, powerful, and effective. God creates by his word, and all his word names come to be (Gen 1). The words create and give what they say. Jesus himself is the eternally pre-existent Word by which God created all things (Jn 1:1–4). That Word became flesh (Jn 1:14). The same words that declare one forgiven for Christ's sake also create the faith that believes the declaration. The words impart and deliver the faith, forgiveness, and eternal life that they declare (Mt 9:2; Jn 20:31; Rom 10:17). Thus these words are means of God's grace. Words of Scripture do not proceed from "the prophet's own interpretation" but flow from the Holy Spirit "carrying [the human authors] along" (2 Pt 1:20–21). "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16). Words of divine origin are objectively true and dynamic. As the Holy Spirit of God reveals those words, he also enlivens them, infusing them with meaning, empowering them to accomplish in the hearer the purpose for which God causes them to be heard (Is 55:10–11).

Nietzsche believes all words are a kind of fiction. They objectify what is really subjective individual or cultural opinion.

In contrast to the Lutheran understanding of divine words, Nietzsche believes all words are a kind of fiction. They objectify what is really subjective individual or cultural opinion. Nietzsche sees the relation between words and the faith in God they deliver, even if he rejects that God: "'Reason in language—oh, what an old deceptive female she is! I am afraid we are not rid of God because we still have faith in grammar" (*Twilight of the Idols: The Problem of Socrates,* 5). Nietzsche sees "language addiction" as a malady, a tool to prop up faith in a God Nietzsche declares dead. Words, even Scriptural words, are mere human reflections of a certain culturally informed perspective, which may or may not be better or worse than some other perspective.

Malcolm Muggeridge purportedly observed, "words are as precious as love, and as easily abused." Nietzsche's writings provide a veritable monument to abusiveness. Consider, for example, the following: What does it mean to "love" man? John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only [only begotten] Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish (German: *verloren*) but have eternal life." Thus, the catholic/Christian faith defines love as God preventing the perishing of man. For Nietzsche, "God" (if there even is one) is not really involved. *Man* must "love" man. How? "The weak and the failures shall perish (German: *sollen zugrunde gehen,* lit. 'shall be razed to the ground'): first principle of *our* love for man. And they shall be given every possible assistance" (*Antichrist,* 2). Nietzsche here completely inverts the biblical definition of love for man. God's love manifests itself in offering eternal life to all people. Nietzsche's love manifests itself by euthanizing the weak.

Such redefinition of biblical phrases and words is common in Nietzsche. Proverbs 29:18 reads, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law." Note the King James Version: "Where there is no vision, the people perish . . . ." Nietzsche also uses this biblical language of "a people perishes" (*Antichrist,* 11), and "when a people is perishing," (*Antichrist,* 16). However, in *Antichrist,* 11 he uses it to warn against transforming a people's duty (that is, to be self-life affirming) to "duty in general" (that is, morality). In *Antichrist,* 16, Nietzsche warns that perishing people moralize. Thus, Scripture warns that if people would not perish, they must retain morality. Nietzsche uses the same language to say the opposite: Perishing people moralize. If a people would not perish, they must *not* be concerned with morality.

Consider another example. Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha. Mary's decision to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to what he said is described by Jesus (Lk 10:42) as the "one thing needed" (or "needful" in the KJV; German "*Eins aber ist not*"). In *Antichrist,* 20, Nietzsche also makes reference to the "one thing needful" ("*eins ist not*"), but he refers to the Buddhist requirement of egoism (!), not to anything remotely related to what Jesus was talking about in the biblical context (except possibly the relation as a total opposite and contradiction).

Again, St. Paul declares, "I am not ashamed of the gospel" (Rom 1:16, German "*Denn ich sch me mich des Evangeliums von Christus nicht.*"). Nietzsche lays a clever linguistic challenge to Paul at the end of *Antichrist,* 38 and beginning of *Antichrist,* 39. He writes of a "miscarriage of falseness" that "modern man . . . is *not ashamed* [German: *nicht sch mt*] to be called a Christian . . . ." As Nietzsche has given Christian words non-Christian definitions, he now gives a non-Christian word a Christian definition, calling the "Evangel" (German: *Evangelium* = Good News) a "Dysangel" (German: *Dysangelium* = Bad News, *Antichrist,* 39). He argues that "it is false to the point of nonsense to find the mark of the Christian in a 'faith', for instance, in the faith in redemption through Christ" (*Antichrist,* 39). Yet, when Paul declares in Romans 1:16 that faith is precisely the mark of a Christian, he agrees fully with what Jesus claims about himself. Nietzsche never mentions Romans 1:16 in the context of these statements. He either assumes his reader knows what portion of Scripture he is challenging, or else he is satisfied to "poison the well" against it.

Nietzsche uses biblical language to do violence to biblical dogma. It is a brilliant, albeit evil, strategy. Such rhetorical tactics are quite consistent with his call to the "revaluation [German: *Umwertung* = transvaluation?] of all values" (*Antichrist,* 62) and with his understanding of the nature of Scriptural language. The issue of the nature of language may be the single greatest impasse between the Nietzschean and the (Lutheran) Christian worldview. Nietzsche writes:

> Our true experiences . . . could not communicate themselves even if they tried. That is because they lack the right word. Whatever we have words for, that we have already got beyond. In all talk there is a grain of contempt. Language, it

> seems, was invented only for what is average, medium, communicable. With language the speaker immediately vulgarizes himself. Out of a morality for deaf-mutes and other philosophers (*Twilight of the Idols: Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,* 26).

Compare Nietzsche's views with those expressed by a modern Lutheran dogmatician:

> The Gospel makes no sense at all. It takes God to do it . . . . Calvary and everything that's somehow bound up with it we are given with the words given by the Spirit of Jesus of whom Jesus said "He will take of mine and give it to you." The Spirit gave the words, and is alive in the words to bestow the gifts they say, that is to create faith where and when He pleases in those who hear the Gospel, the words that are possible only because of Jesus.

Nietzsche lumps the words of Holy Scripture together with all merely human words; it is his position that the Holy Scriptures are indeed nothing more than that (*Antichrist,* 55). The Jesus of Holy Scripture, in whom Christians place their faith, declares: "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (Jn 6:63). The meaning of the words with which a Nietzschean and an orthodox Christian would attempt to converse are even in dispute. Nietzsche, consistently, sees those words as mundane. He would play with them, but he could hardly take the conversation seriously. After all, how much depth of meaning can there be in anything that is verbally expressed? By contrast, the orthodox Christian would confess the words of Jesus Christ and him crucified for the remission of sins, life, and salvation; and he would pray that the Holy Spirit would use such words miraculously to produce faith in the heart of the Nietzschean.

Some liberal theologians (some doubtless known to Nietzsche) surrender the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. While allowing that Scripture is of strictly human origin, they still attempt to derive religious meaning from it. They hold an utterly untenable position, effectively granting Nietzsche his premise but then not following through to the conclusion. To the orthodox Christian, such "liberal theologians" are apostate. They undermine the very foundation from which the call to faith and faith claims emanate. To Nietzsche, they deserve harsher judgment than Christians of "strict belief," for they hypocritically hold on to an amended faith for which there really is no basis. True faith receives the Scriptures as the word of God; unbelief rejects them. Nietzsche attributes the Christian reception of the Scriptures to the deception of priests (*Antichrist,* 26) and to slave morality (*Antichrist,* 7). Christians attribute Nietzsche's rejection of Scripture as the word of God to his rejection of the Holy Spirit and his baptismal faith in favor of a willful return to the unregenerate thinking of the old sinful human nature.

> This is what we [the apostles] speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor 2:13–14).

Christians, on the other hand, do understand spiritual matters, precisely because of the renewed human nature and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit whom they received in the washing of holy baptism (Ti 3:4–7). By the enlightening power of this same Holy Spirit, Christians receive and believe in the Holy Scriptures, as the Holy Spirit causes those Scriptures to impose themselves on the faithful of all times and in all places.

For Nietzsche, the attempt to live life according to a Christian morality is what negates life and makes one less than fully human.

Concerning the divine quality which orthodox (Lutheran) Christians thus attribute to the words of Holy Scripture, they and their Nietzschean opponents can agree on only one point: The impasse is insurmountable.

BEYOND GOOD AND BAD

> *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments* (*Jesus, Mt 22:37–40*).

> *Jesus said to his Jews: "The law was for servants—love God as I love him, as his son! What are morals to us sons of God!"* (*Nietzsche,* Beyond Good and Evil, *164*).

According to the Christian faith, people now are less than God intended them to be. Original sin has corrupted human nature. In short, all people are now born less than fully human, and only the intervention of God's grace can restore them. This grace is given in holy baptism (Rom 6:1–8; Gal 3:26–27; Col 2:11–12; 1 Pt 3:21) and empowers the individual Christian to live in true obedience to God, that is, morally. Moral behavior is defined by Christ himself as loving God with the whole of one's being, and loving one's neighbor as oneself (Mt 22:36–40). The boundaries of behavior are further clarified by the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and all other moral mandates which one finds in the canonical Scriptures.

For Nietzsche, the nature with which a person is born is what it means to be fully or ideally human, and the attempt to live life according to a Christian morality is what negates life and makes one less than fully human. One then determines how to behave by judging whether or not the behavior in question is good or bad. Nietzsche clarifies:

> The falseness of a judgment is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgment; in this respect our new language may sound the strangest. The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species cultivating. And we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgments . . . are the most indispensable for us . . . . To recognize untruth as a condition of life . . . a philosophy that risks this would by that token alone place itself *beyond good and evil* (*Beyond Good and Evil,* 4).

Is Nietzsche telling us the truth here? The statement raises important questions about itself and about all of Nietzsche's statements. A Christian seeking honest dialog with Nietzsche (or those who share his views) cannot assume that Nietzsche or the Nietzscheans place a similar premium on honesty. A consistent Nietzschean should have no compunctions about lying in a heartbeat, if, for whatever reason, he finds his lie to be "life-promoting." For the sake of continuing the discussion one must suspend such reservations and assume that Nietzsche in his writings presents his views honestly, but one dare not make that assumption naively.

Nietzsche's "master morality" St. Paul would call "slavery to sin," while he would call Nietzsche's "slave morality" a form of "slavery of obedience."

Nietzsche invites us to move *Beyond Good and Evil* by living precisely the instinctive life that Christianity views as corrupt.

> I reduce a principle to a formula. Every naturalism in morality—is dominated by an instinct of life . . . . *Anti-natural* morality—that is, almost every morality which has so far been taught, revered, and preached—turns, conversely, *against* the instincts of life: it is *condemnation* of these instincts, now secret, now outspoken and impudent. When it says, "God looks at the heart," it says No to both the lowest and the highest desires of life, and posits God as the *enemy of life.* The saint in whom God delights is the ideal eunuch. Life has come to an end where the "kingdom of God" begins (*Twilight of the Idols: Morality as Anti-Nature,* 4).

Now, a point that has been implicit throughout this paper must be made explicit. For the Christian, one can live the new life that is created in baptism (Rom 6:4), or one can live according to the old sinful nature. St. Paul goes on to say, "you are slaves to the one you obey, whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness." A Christian would acknowledge that a great many unbelievers also try in some measure to live according to the dictates of conscience, but this inevitably remains unsatisfactory to God (Heb 11:6). Further, a Christian would acknowledge that even Christians "daily sin much" (SC III, Fifth Petition). Thus the two available ways of life are the life of the new, regenerate nature (conscience obeying) and the life of the old sinful nature (conscience defying). Both of these St. Paul describes as slavery, the former being a blessed slavery and the latter a cursed slavery, which in turn are reflected as mixed within the lives lived by all Christians.

For Nietzsche there are also roughly two ways a person can live: one can live according to slave morality or one can live according to master morality. Nietzsche's description of these ways of life corresponds approximately to the two ways of life a Christian believes a person can live. Nietzsche's "master morality" St. Paul would call "slavery to sin," while he would call Nietzsche's "slave morality" a form of "slavery of obedience," that is, regenerate/baptized living. The Christian and the Nietzschean differ profoundly in the way of life each favors. Nietzsche favors the masterful/sinful life, while the Christian prefers the slave morality/obedient life. The distinction is not absolute in either case: Nietzsche probably believes that masterfully minded people sometimes behave slavishly, while Lutherans believe the righteous are at once both saints and sinners. Nevertheless, as a broad generalization, the inverse correspondence holds.

One striking example of this inversion of the faith is Nietzsche's treatment of Pilate's life and attitudes, already mentioned in section one above. Nietzsche assesses Pilate quite favorably, describing him as the only figure in the whole of the New Testament who commands respect (*Antichrist,* 46). In stark contrast to this "pro-instinctive" morality, Jesus expressly warns:

> What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.' (Mk 7:20)

Jesus warns *against* instinct (namely, what proceeds from "men's hearts"). For a fallen humanity that which is instinctive is often evil. Thus the issue at hand is this: for Nietzsche, those actions which are instinctive and affirming of instinctive life are "good," while all that stands in opposition to such a life (including Christian morality) is "bad." For the Christian, what is instinctive may not only be "bad" but even "evil." Furthermore, Christ gives "good" a twofold definition consisting primarily of complete love for God (faith), and secondarily love for one's neighbor. These are the two main principles upon which all other divinely revealed moral laws are based. So, to which of these two sources shall one turn to determine how one should live?

After providing a veritable litany of Luther citations (the vocabulary of which would make an elderly Lutheran ladies' Bible class wilt), Walter Kaufmann notes: "Never was intellectual honesty attacked with such impassioned and relentless honesty." As Nietzsche had nothing to lose if Jesus turned out to be other than Nietzsche depicted him, so a Lutheran has nothing to lose if reason and observation lead to unscriptural conclusions. If one honestly does "fear, love, and trust in God above all things" (SC I, Explanation to the First Commandment), reason must remain subservient. If reason led one to conclude that

Nietzsche was correct in saying that it would be "good" to behave instinctively, Lutherans would repent of such reasoning and seek, with the help of God, to conform to the pattern of life that he has entrusted to the faithful.

Does reason lead one, however, to conclude that one should live instinctively (Nietzsche) or counter-instinctively (Christ, at least in some cases)? This question is perhaps not as simple as it appears. Christians may, for example, have sex or kill people under certain conditions, actions that Nietzsche would probably consider "instinctive" whenever a Christian indulged in such behavior. Still, divine revelation has put strict, and certainly counter-instinctive limitations on the circumstances under which a Christian may engage in such actions. The question remains: Which is more "life affirming": behavior which is instinctive or counter-instinctive?

Nietzsche fails to explain what constitutes a "life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving," or "even species-cultivating" judgment or behavior.

Nietzsche presents his case most clearly on this issue in his books *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals.* In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche begins by stating that the value of a judgment should not be determined by its veracity or lack thereof, but rather by the extent to which the judgment in question is "life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating" (*Beyond Good and Evil,* 4).

Nietzsche fails, even approximately, to explain what constitutes a "life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving," or "even species-cultivating" judgment or behavior. Does one prioritize one's own life over one's species, or vice-versa? Does he mean by "species" simply "humanity," or some narrower subset thereof? These are critical issues for judging one's own behavior and that of others. Someone acting out of self-interest behaves differently from one who seeks to act in the best interests of the species. Nietzsche does not, at this point, clarify.

In section 32 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche outlines the history of morality. For most of human history, actions were evaluated based on their consequences: actions were good if the result was good, and conversely, actions were considered bad if the result was bad. Nietzsche calls this the "pre-moral period of mankind." In the last ten thousand years, the so-called "moral" period, actions have been judged based on their motive: actions are deemed good if the intention is good (even if something bad resulted), and evil if motivated by evil (again, even if good followed). Nietzsche labels this "a calamitous new superstition, an odd narrowness of interpretation . . . almost to the present day this prejudice dominated moral praise, blame, judgment, and philosophy on earth." He sees this development, this "reversal of perspective" as "bad," a wrong turn in the moral history of the race. Finally, Nietzsche proposes that humanity now take a third step, the step to an "extra-moral" epoch. This too he describes as a "reversal and fundamental shift in values." He declares, "We immoralists have the suspicion that the decisive value of an action lies precisely in what is *unintentional* in it." When he speaks of what is "unintentional," one suspects he means "instinctive." The old morality (of man's "moral" period) is "something that must be overcome."

This last reversal at best returns to the "pre-moral" condition, and Nietzsche's proposed "immoralism" may be even worse than his "pre-moral" amorality. Consider the issue from a didactic standpoint. How shall one teach children to act? In the pre-moral era, one might punish them when their actions resulted in something bad, and reward them when their actions resulted in something good. Nevertheless, "the best laid plans . . . go oft astray." People would thus learn that their reputation as "good" or "bad" was as beyond their control as the results of their endeavors, and motivation to seek the good would wane. Such morality would produce a less motivated society than one that valued good intentions, even when success proved elusive.

Further, individuals who lived under this "pre-moral" framework would be highly motivated to lie. If society approves only of good results, one has compelling reason to make a result *look* good, even if it was *not* really good. Since apparent goodness is often easier to achieve than substantial goodness, such people would be less motivated to progress as a society in terms of actually accomplishing good things. Perhaps a reasonable example of the weakness identified here would be the rash of recent business failings, beginning with Enron.

What Nietzsche calls a moral wrong turn is "better" didactically and psychologically. When one teaches members of a society to will the good, good will more likely be accomplished. Admittedly, there will exist a motive to deceive: people will try to pass off actions with evil motivations as being motivated by good. However, even such lies reinforce the point that one should have good motives, that is, one should desire the common good, one "ought" to be moral.

In proposing an "extra-moral" valuing of actions based on their instinctiveness, what does one have? It would depend on the instincts of the individuals involved. Many would argue that parents "instinctively" protect their young, and do other things that might be "good" for society as a whole. Some people, however, have quite undesirable instincts. Suppose someone had an "instinctive" desire to eradicate red-haired people, or to engage in aggressive or even forcible sexual activities, or even to simply be lazy, accomplishing nothing. Would one want to encourage such instinctive behaviors? Is such instinctive behavior life-affirming?

These questions raise again the critical issue of whether one should pursue individual or corporate life affirmation. The mass murderer, the rapist, and the lazy person may all be very affirming of their own lives, but clearly they are not affirming of the lives of other people.

One concludes that reason alone, without appeal to Scripture, suffices to show that a "moral" society is preferable to a "pre-moral" or an "extra-moral" one. In a society where two people agree not to kill each other (at least not arbitrarily), both lives are affirmed. Something like "you shall not murder" makes sense

from the standpoint of being "life affirming" for everybody, if both parties co-operate. An "every-man-for-himself" extra-moral framework for evaluating actions invites violent and relatively short lives. Ultimately, pursuit of corporate life affirmation will produce the maximum good for individual life affirmation as well. One may similarly argue for sexual morality, for respecting the possessions and reputations of others.

Finally, the key to refraining from these "life negating" actions is to overcome the desire to negate another's life. Thus, logically, one should not covet such things as would negate another's life. Moral behavior is life-affirming behavior, and it looks a lot like the last seven of the Ten Commandments. Such behavior is often (if not usually!) counter-impulsive, but repressing life-negating evil intuition certainly seems to be life-affirming.

One concludes that reason alone, without appeal to Scripture, suffices to show that a "moral" society is preferable to a "pre-moral" or an "extra-moral" one.

To summarize thus far: to teach individuals to behave in a manner that would be most life-affirming for everyone, one must take into account the motive of an action. Does the actor intend to be life-affirming of self and others? To rephrase the question, is the actor's motive good or evil? The motive or desire to affirm the lives of others would reasonably be adjudicated "good," while the desire to negate the lives of others would reasonably be adjudicated "evil." Such a moral environment is the one most conducive to the affirmation of life. Evaluated against simple human observation, Nietzsche's proposals come out looking bad, while the morality entrusted to humanity by God in the pages of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures makes sense.

A more detailed discussion of the history of morality is found in *Beyond Good and Evil,* 257–264, and in *On the Genealogy of Morals.* The main points of the story remain the same. The movement from the pre-moral epoch to the moral one resulted from the establishment of communities of increasing power and size. Two factors prove critical at this juncture.

The first critical factor is the domination of weaker peoples by a more powerful, more instinctive race of "blond beasts" (or, in the case of the Arabs and the Japanese, apparently darker haired people who nevertheless behaved 'blondly'. See *On the Genealogy of Morals,* I, 11; *Beyond Good and Evil,* 257). Two divergent moralities consequently develop: the ruling nobility (the "masters") think of themselves as good (bold, strong, and the like), and consequently they view anything unlike themselves as "bad." This is "master morality." Such morality is supposedly superior because it is "active." The moral agent is not "reacting" to anything. The only point of moral reference is the moral agent's own will.

The initial reference point for slaves is not they themselves, but their overlords. Because their overlords are thought to exploit and dominate them, the slaves view the character traits of the masters as "evil," that is, not just undesirable, but morally wrong. In slave morality, "good" is effectively defined as "non-threatening." Thus, to be bold and dominating or to exert power over another is deemed to be "evil," while to be humble and self-effacing is deemed to be "good." This morality is "other" oriented, thus "reactive" and supposedly inferior.

The second critical factor was the creation of the "contractual relationship between creditor and debtor" (*On the Genealogy of Morals,* II, 4). At some point in the past, if a debtor could not repay a creditor, the creditor extracted compensatory pain from his debtor. Nietzsche's theory assumes that the creditor enjoyed inflicting pain on his debtor, and thus considered the pain "compensatory" in some way (*On the Genealogy of Morals,* II, 5). The inflicting of pain was mainly a didactic device, an aid to memory, a means of reminding people not to threaten the stability of the society by acting in instinctive but destabilizing ways. Once pain was viewed as compensatory, however, the notion of sacrificing to ancestors (particularly the founders of the society, to which the whole society was "indebted") became quite natural. The stronger the society became, the greater the perceived debt to the ancestors. These ancestors assumed the stature of gods (*On the Genealogy of Morals,* II, 19). Especially among the societal slaves, the instinctive desire to be cruel could find no outlet, so it turned inward, resulting in a feeling of indebtedness and the masochistic cruelty of "bad conscience" (*On the Genealogy of Morals,* II, 17).

The "maximum feeling of guilty indebtedness" resulted in "the maximum God attained so far," that is, the Christian God (*On the Genealogy of Morals,* II, 20). The debt is so great that humanity cannot repay it. God has to sacrifice himself. "God himself makes payment to himself," and He supposedly does this out of love for his debtors (*On the Genealogy of Morals,* II, 21).

One further point needs to be made before one can begin to reflect on Nietzsche's argument concerning the origin of the Christian God and Christian (read: "slave") morality: Nietzsche believed that, at some point, there was a slave rebellion in morals (*Beyond Good and Evil* 195, 260). The (weak!) slaves rose up against their stronger, nobler masters and forced them (at least outwardly) to accept slave morality. Thus, today, Christian notions of good and evil continue to receive acceptance (at least in Europe) even where Christianity as a religion is rejected.

Nietzsche's narrative argument receives consideration now. Eventually, the most critical aspect of it is his presupposition that morality and belief in God are *not* to be explained by the actual existence of a god or gods. Nietzsche's pseudo-history may be seen as a myth he has provided for his readers. He would have known this literary device from his study of the ancient Greeks. Nietzsche has taken the current state of affairs, reflected upon the nature and psychology of believers and unbelievers as he knows them, and created a story that he believes clarifies the current situation and portrays it with psychological, if not historical accuracy.

Nietzsche suggests that nobility and strength belong only to his mythological masters, not to the Jews/Christians/slave-morality people (*Beyond Good and Evil,* 260). Is this fair? While allowing for the possibility of disparate definitions, consider the words of Nietzsche's arch-villain, St. Paul. In 1 Corinthians 16:13, he writes,

"Be men! Be strong!" ἀνδρίζεσθε, κραταιοῦσθε. The passive tense (lit., "be made strong, be made men") locates the source of strength and manhood externally, that is, God makes the Christian "strong" and "a man." Nietzsche could (and would) argue that this shows a poor self image, rather than glorying in one's *innate* strength. That would be fair. However, clearly the force of the admonition is to encourage Christians to be "strong men," not "weak wimps." To suggest in any way that Christianity encourages the latter would *not* be fair.

And again, in Philippians 4:8–9, St. Paul encourages Christians to think about (and put into practice) "whatever is noble [σεμνά]." Bismarck once said, "A truly great man is marked by three signs: generosity in the design, humanity in the execution, moderation in the success." If one accepts this definition of nobility, then this quality seems accessible to all. Certainly it does not require one to repress someone else, or to remain unconcerned in the face of human suffering, or to affirm only that stratum of humanity most similar to oneself. In short, Nietzsche distorts Christianity by painting it as a religion of the ignoble and the weak.

Another weakness in Nietzsche's argument is the theory that slave morality was finally able to win the day. Perhaps it would not surprise us if slave morality won a skirmish here or a battle there, but how could it so completely win the war all over Europe for a millennium and a half? If strength, intelligence, and the will to dominate are all attributes found primarily among the masters, how then were the weak, stupid, and docile ever able or even sufficiently motivated successfully to launch and maintain a slave rebellion, whether in the moral or in any other sense? The whole idea is *prima facie* absurd. It would have required the intervention of a God for them to succeed (see Exodus).

Alas, the issue of the origin of God and morality had to end at an impasse, because it began with one. Nietzsche *a priori* rules out any suggestion that the Christian God exists, let alone that he built morality into human nature. Against this, one may argue that morality inheres in all people, and that a version of the "golden rule" is intuitively evident to most people (as it was to Buddha four hundred years before it was spoken by Christ). It cannot be proven, nor do orthodox Lutheran Christians believe it based on their observations. They believe it because the word of God, revealed through St. Paul, says: "The requirements of the law are written on their hearts," (that is, the hearts of those living without benefit of revelation, Rom 2:15). Nietzsche says these Lutherans are the product of *ressentiment.* They may say he has rejected the Holy Spirit whom God gave him through the hand of his father in baptism, and so he reasons in according to prophecy: "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim 4:1–2). One arrives at another impasse.

Just as the issue of morality and bad conscience creates an impasse, the subsequent question concerning how to be free of the bad conscience leads to an even greater impasse. Nietzsche finds the solution in a new and improved Jesus or some other such person, as discussed above in part one. Ideally, the answer is to become an *übermensch.* One should realize that bad conscience is the result of *ressentiment,* whereupon one needs to follow the Nietzschean Jesus' example of leaving both *ressentiment* and bad conscience behind.

The baptized faithful see the issue entirely differently. They recognize that people most often feel guilty because they *are* guilty. Their consciences warn them that there is an objective "right and wrong" (read: good and evil), and that the objectivity of this right and wrong is located in the designer of humanity, who built this basic sense into all people. People's consciences condemn them, and where revealed religion is either rejected or unavailable (that is, where Christianity has not yet been proclaimed), they concoct all kinds of human religions to alleviate this sense of guilt. Revealed religion, however, proclaims Jesus Christ as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). By Jesus' death on the cross, he made atonement for sin (Heb 2:10–18; Rom 3:22–26). This atonement was necessary to maintain the integrity of divine justice, that is, because God, being holy and perfect, could not compromise on the principle of justice. Through faith in Jesus' vicarious sacrifice, guilt is taken away.

The impasse of the conclusion defies resolution, because it results from an impasse in presuppositions.

Again, one arrives at an impasse of faith and unbelief. The impasse of the conclusion defies resolution, because it results from an impasse in presuppositions. Nietzsche cannot take seriously the possibility of divine intervention in this world, certainly not in anything that approaches the Christian sense of the divine. Christians can at best condescend to play the philosopher's game for a while, but they cannot really agree to limit themselves to rational rules of inquiry, since the presuppositions of such reasoning fall under the species of unbelief. Lutheran Christians take God's revelation of himself in Christ Jesus to be *the* supreme reality. They esteem the words of Holy Scripture to be the breath of God, offering forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ Jesus, and further revealing all things necessary for salvation (Jn 20:31) and "for the man of God to be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:15–17). An insurmountable impasse in the initial *principium cognoscendi* leads inevitably to an impasse in the assessment of the origin of morality and the meaning of the life of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

Consider that the word of Sirach, chap. 3, 33: "Even unto death defend the truth, and God the Lord will fight for you," will come true in our case too. May that be your motto! Fight unto death in behalf of the truth, and God the Lord will fight for you! (C. F. W. Walther).

> *They are my enemies, I confess it, these Germans . . . they also have on their conscience the most unclean kind of Christianity there is, the most incurable, the most irrefutable: Protestantism. If we do not get rid of Christianity, it will be the fault of the* Germans (Nietzsche, *Antichrist,* 61).

Norman Cantor's book *Inventing the Middle Ages* includes a gloomy prophecy: "On the devastated linguistic and semiotic wastes of the future, Eisenstein's clamorous and awesome Teutonic Knights will drop their black visors and win the next time around." One would hardly describe the 'Friedrich of history' as awesome in appearance. The 'Nietzsche of Post-Modernist faith', however, has profoundly affected philosophy and religion in the last century, not least of all with the perspectivism that necessarily follows from a semiotic view of language. In short, Nietzsche has done much to create precisely the linguistic and semiotic wastes that Cantor has described. On such an intellectual/spiritual battlefield, Nietzsche's "philosophers of the future" look a lot like Eisenstein's "Teutonic Knights," and they do indeed have the upper hand. One certainly sees this in the secular realm where, in the finest of Reformed tradition vis-à-vis the Eucharistic debate, an American president evades the consequences of clear words by arguing that "it depends on what your definition of 'is' is." And one even sees it within the church, for example in the current Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod controversy over what the words "unionism and syncretism of every description" might mean.

Without at least some recognition of a universal moral standard and a Universal Judge of that standard to whom all shall answer, one can only expect the recurrence of the wholesale slaughter of millions resulting from a "might makes right" morality.

Mankind has witnessed the advent and the fruits of the moral relativism with which the last century has struggled, the moral perspectivism that comes closer to being Nietzschean "dogma" than any other aspect of his philosophy. The notion that "might makes right" receives wide acceptance. This view has resulted in the murderous intolerance of racial diversity by the extreme right, and in the even more murderous intolerance of economic diversity by the extreme left. In America, this "might makes right" mentality was used (and informally still is used) to justify white (particularly Anglo) male repression of other groups. One finds it now in reverse, perhaps a bit more subtly, in the seeming vilification of the white male (heterosexual) Protestant by non-white and male and heterosexual and Protestant groups now seeking privileged access to the corridors of power by claiming "repressed minority" status. The common thread in each of these cases is the demotion of truth to a perspective (and just one among many). Focus turns away from truth, toward consideration of which actions affirm the few who belong to whichever particular group wields power. Without at least some recognition of a universal moral standard and a Universal Judge of that standard to whom all shall answer, one can only expect the recurrence of the wholesale slaughter of millions resulting from a "might makes right" morality.

Confessional Lutherans cannot agree to fight on semiotic terrain. Without reliable, divinely-revealed, Holy-Spirit-breathed words, the Christian faith has no ground on which to stand. The Christian faith exists only because the words of the Lord have the sacramental power to change the spiritual condition of human beings. The church must fight on the territory of perspicuous words, and must diligently refuse removal onto the losing terrain of "linguistic and semiotic wastes." The liberal churches and liberal theologians have already surrendered too much. They claim to remain Christian, but they advance arguments belonging to the species of unbelief.

True Christians and Nietzsche must agree that an impasse has arisen. Nietzsche claims that the impasse stems from the divergence of the perspectives of slave morality and master morality. The Christian would claim that the impasse stems from the divergence of those who examine the issues with minds illuminated by the Holy Spirit (believers) over against those who examine the issues from the distorted perspective of their unregenerate minds. However, the nature of the impasse is linguistically constructed, the impasse itself remains.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Four and a half centuries ago, those who clung in faith to the divinely revealed words (Lutherans) were threatened from another quarter. They formed the Smalcaldic League, and from 1531 to 1547, the coins, medals, flags and guns of the Smalcaldic League bore the confession, *Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum*, The Word of the Lord Endures Forever (1 Pt 1:25). After the cause had long appeared hopeless, the hand of God changed the once apparent course of history. Emperor Charles v found himself chased all the way to Innsbruck. With the Religious Peace of Augsburg of 1555, the survival of the churches of the Lutheran confession was secured for another day.

Now, Cantor speaks of semiotic and linguistic wastelands. Is anyone so blind as to be unable to see them? He predicts that the "Teutonic Knights," Nietzschean in some sense one may suppose, will "win the next time around." So it has gone for over a century now, and who can deny that the defeat of those who cling to the word of the Lord appears to be the course of history once again? Man's reason leads to such conclusions. Alas, such reasoning is an act of insubordination. The Lord attaches to the great baptism mandate an equally great promise: "I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." Then and there, he entrusts his eleven, armed with his words, with the making of disciples. So let reason remain subject to the Lord's commands and promises. When the orders come, soldiers do not second-guess the probability of victory. They draw their sword, and prepare to fight . . . so especially for soldiers of the cross:

Take the helmet of salvation that the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (*Eph 6:17*).

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (*Heb 4:12*).

David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me . . . and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands" (*1 Sam 17:45–47*).

Finally, from Philippians 2:9–11: "*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Amen.*

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Cambridge and the Early English Reformation

Korey D. Maas

Historians of the Tudor church have generally agreed that the English Reformation began at Cambridge.[1] They have not agreed, however, on the nature of this Cambridge movement. The question raised is whether it is possible to apply a comprehensive and coherent definition to the early, first decade of reform in England.[2] Some argue that there was at this time "no clear line of common action, no very precise idea of the issues which were to become the chief debating points of the Reformation."[3] Others, when speaking of the Cambridge reformers, posit a clear and early unity by claiming, for example, that Robert Barnes's Christmas Eve sermon of 1525 was meant to be "a public statement of their views."[4] One author even suggests that Barnes's sermon and William Tyndale's New Testament translation of the same year were "not only coincident but concerted endeavors."[5]

Those attempting to find a common denominator among the early reformers have typically argued one of two theses. The first, and until recent decades the most prevalent, has been that the Cambridge men of the 1520s were primarily theological reformers akin to those on the continent. Some more recent works, however, suggest that these men were neither first nor foremost seeking doctrinal change, but simply moral and educational reform along humanist lines. These two distinct theses will be examined in an attempt to understand the part Cambridge played in the development and definition of the early Reformation in England.[6]

Many were caught up in the controversial events of the 1520s; a manageable investigation, however, must focus attention on only a few individuals. The familiar figures of Desiderius Erasmus, John Fisher, Robert Barnes, Thomas Bilney, and John Frith prove particularly suited to the proposed inquiry. Though departing before the 1520s, it has been noted that "the Cambridge movement began with Erasmus;"[7] and it was Fisher, the university chancellor, who first brought Erasmus to Cambridge. Nor was the chancellor unfamiliar with those who presumably frequented the White Horse Tavern. He was labeled "a great enemy and persecutor of John Frith."[8] He likewise participated in the examinations of Bilney and Barnes, the "leaders among the Cambridge Reformers."[9]

The observation that the "disputes of Tudor Cambridge were greatly concerned with the passions and prejudices of academic persons" suggests the proper place in which to begin investigation: within the walls of the academic institution itself.[10] The faculty, statutes, lectures, and literature of the university shed much light on the ideas being imbibed by its scholars. Already with a statute of 1488 the shift had begun from a curricular foundation in logic toward one in which the humanities were to be emphasized. Not only would the lectures change, but so too would the lecturers. Though not mandated by statute, the new lectures would be, with rare exception, "established, endowed, and delivered by members of the reforming, humanist circles."[11] This was certainly true in the arts faculty, but no less so in the faculty of theology, where both Fisher and Erasmus would hold the Lady Margaret professorship.

It would seem, according to epistolary rumors at least, that the humanist emphases of the new curriculum and faculty were enthusiastically received; as the 1520s drew near the university was held up to be admired by those favoring good letters and to be imitated by those still resisting curricular reform. Having heard that the students there were "keenly studying Greek" and were "great supporters" of his New Testament,[12] Erasmus wrote in 1517 that "Cambridge is a changed place," having no further use for "frigid hair-splitting."[13] Thomas More concurred. Intending to arouse jealousy, he wrote to Oxford in 1518 that even those not studying Greek were "so moved by common interest in their university that they are actually making large individual contributions to the salary of the Greek professor."[14] The credit for such enthusiasm was given to Fisher.

Whether this is an entirely accurate picture might be questioned. Even disregarding the humanist penchant for exaggeration, the testimonies of Erasmus and More, neither being present in Cambridge at the time, are perhaps not the best on which to build a case. The reformist nature of Fisher's chancellorship cannot be denied; on the basis of available evidence, however, it must certainly be qualified. As is frequently pointed out, not until 1535 were canon law and Scotus, Fisher's favorite theologian, finally removed from the curriculum. Though being supplemented, the traditional scholasticism was not challenged, "not with Fisher, nor with Erasmus's Cambridge friends, and not even in the colleges at the forefront of humanism."[15] In fact, even the foremost of these colleges, St. John's, received from Fisher at this time several works of scholastic theology and canon law.[16]

The opinion expressed in Fisher's *De Veritate Corporis et Sanguinis Christi in Eucharistia* seems representative of his aims as chancellor:

> Even though they are equipped with the three languages, nevertheless if they lack practice in the scholastic method, they may express the opinion which they have conceived, but

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> when they have expressed it, there is an end to it. They lack the power either to establish their own views firmly or to assail the errors of others strongly.[17]

On the basis of such evidence, Richard Rex is undoubtedly correct in his suggestion that Fisher was attempting to

> reinvigorate the old blood of the scholastics with the new blood of the humanists, not as an intermediate stage in some progress out of darkness into light, but as an interesting combination of two great, though fundamentally dissimilar, traditions.[18]

Following this program the university, even while promoting reform, would remain "strictly orthodox" in the 1520s.[19]

Erasmus wrote in 1517 that "Cambridge is a changed place," having no further use for "frigid hair-splitting."

Since orthodoxy peacefully coexisted with humanist reform in the curriculum, it is to extra-curricular affairs that attention must next be turned. On the basis of the secondary literature, one might assume that the most significant extra-curricular activities of early sixteenth-century Cambridge were the meetings then taking place at the White Horse Tavern. Though there may be reason to question the amount of attention it has received, the debate surrounding the White Horse is paradigmatic of the larger issue. Some have placed the tavern in a category with the later Wesleyan "holiness clubs," primarily a meeting place for religious dissenters. Others, however, have downplayed the allegedly religious character of the meetings, preferring instead to emphasize a non-doctrinal humanist interpretation. There is support for this; those presumed to have met at the White Horse display unmistakably humanist sympathies. Barnes's first reforming act was not in fact his Christmas Eve sermon; it was the purging of Scotus from his Austin friary in favor of Terence, Plautus, Cicero, and St. Paul.[20] Bilney professed his admiration for Erasmus's eloquence in a letter addressed to Bishop Tunstall, a man himself highly praised for his love of letters.[21] It has even been suggested that Frith produced a translation of Erasmus's *Paraclesis*.[22] The source of these humanist leanings may have been Erasmus himself; evidence shows that his books were "ubiquitous" in Cambridge libraries.[23]

Given the stature of Erasmus, however, it is easy to overestimate his influence in England, especially after 1517.[24] And while it is true that Erasmus was the most widely read contemporary author, it was Martin Luther who was soon receiving the most public attention. His *Ninety-Five Theses* were already circulating in 1518, a copy being sent by Erasmus to Thomas More less than six months after they were first published in Germany.[25] The king himself was reading the *Babylonian Captivity* early in 1521.[26] Even as early as May 1520, a month before *Exsurge Domine* mandated the burning of Luther's works, Erasmus would claim that bonfires had been contemplated in England.[27] However limited the availability of Luther's books in the first few years of the 1520s, it is apparent that continental Protestant literature became widely—and distressingly—popular in England as the decade progressed.

By 1526 such literature had become so popular in Cambridge that it could no longer be kept secret. Receiving word of an imminent search, Robert Forman, president of Queens College, sounded the warning that allowed some thirty students to hide their illegal books.[28] Even more significant than the connection between Cambridge and the ownership of heretical literature is that linking Cambridge with its distribution. In 1528 the stationer Sygar Nicholson was charged not only with owning, but also with circulating Protestant works.[29] But it was again Forman who aroused the most suspicion, and no longer for merely protecting such books. The finger was pointed at Forman—and at his university—when these works began circulating even in Cardinal Wolsey's newly founded Oxford college.[30]

Early in 1528 Forman's curate, Thomas Garret, was seized at Oxford.[31] He was found to have been delivering books, a large percentage of which were Lutheran.[32] A subsequent search found numerous works "hid under the earth, and otherwise secretely conveyed from place to place."[33] Not only had his curate been caught; it was further revealed that Forman's servant had been bringing books to Oxford.[34] Of course, one does not simply arrive at the Cardinal's college advertising heretical literature. John London, the warden of New College, was undoubtedly correct in believing that John Clarke, Cambridge master and recently appointed canon at Wolsey's college, "was his caller unto Oxford."[35] Bishop Longland conveyed the same information to Wolsey, mentioning also the names of other Cambridge men then in Oxford, including John Frith.[36] Between Forman and the Cardinal College men, it was clear where blame was to be placed; London wished that neither Clarke "nor any other Cambridge man" had been sent to Oxford.[37]

The popularity of Lutheran books also produced antagonistic effects at the younger university. Their enlightening effects on those of the White Horse circle are commonly mentioned by modern commentators. But even the contemporary Cambridge man John Bale, for example, claimed that Barnes owed his conversion primarily to the reading of Lutheran books.[38] By way of contrast, and perhaps even more telling than the names of those Cambridge men converted by Luther's books, are the names of those who officially examined these books and pronounced them unorthodox. Henry Bullock, Robert Ridley, Humphrey Walkden, and John Watson are not the names of reactionary scholastics. Rather, these were the humanist friends of both Fisher and Erasmus.

Within the educational and theological milieu of early sixteenth-century Cambridge, Erasmus and Fisher testify to the ability of orthodoxy and humanism to coexist peacefully. Bilney, Barnes, and Frith, as will be shown, testify to the ability of humanism to coexist peacefully with the new continental theology. In the light of such interrelations, Erika Rummel has rightly noted that "confusion reigned over the relationship between humanists and

reformers" throughout the 1520s.[39] It would seem, however, that the fundamentally different aims of humanists and evangelicals were becoming readily apparent by mid-decade. Some in England may have initially concurred with Bucer's claim that Luther "agrees in everything with Erasmus, with the only difference that what Erasmus merely hints at, Luther teaches openly."[40] By 1524, when Erasmus was finally persuaded to publish against Luther, this position became impossible to hold. Even Erasmus himself had already asked in 1519, "what have I in common with Luther?"[41] While some may have wished to read Luther through a humanist lens, more astute readers had already recognized the theological implications of his work. One such reader was Chancellor Fisher, who in 1521 would preach at a public burning of Lutheran books. While giving no indication that the continental heresy had already become an English heresy, Fisher recognized that Lutheran doctrine may prove attractive to "the weaker brethren amongst those for whom Scriptural piety and learning commanded the greatest respect—university students and young graduates."[42] Ironically, as a witness numbered Fisher's crowd at thirty thousand people, it may have been this sermon that first introduced Luther's views to those very students and graduates.[43] Fisher, who proved so influential in promoting Cambridge humanism and Cambridge orthodoxy, may also have played a significant role in introducing the Lutheran influence.

The intellectual influences prevalent in 1520s Cambridge and the responses given them provide a preliminary indication of the manner in which the developing controversy was perceived by those involved. To establish these perceptions more precisely an examination of their public statements—sermons, letters, treatises, and translations—is necessary.

While some may have wished to read Luther through a humanist lens, more astute readers had already recognized the theological implications of his work.

The official reaction to the unorthodox ideas being introduced to England is made clear from those works which were prohibited in the 1520s. It is made more so by looking at those which were promoted. In the earliest years of the decade, Richard Rex has noted that "all we see of the Reformation in Cambridge is Luther, and all we see of Luther is rejection."[44] This indeed appears to be the case. Already in the first half of 1521 Wolsey had commissioned Oxford and Cambridge theologians to write against Luther. Before they did so, however, the opinion of the king himself became public in the *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum.* Though debate regarding the authorship of this treatise began almost immediately, it is not insignificant that its existence was first announced during Fisher's 1521 sermon and that it would later be included in the sixteenth-century edition of Fisher's works.[45] While his authorship remains unproved, the *Assertio* cannot be divorced from Fisher's theological output. As Craig D'Alton has noted, "the English tract writing campaign of 1521–1525 was an extended footnote on the king's book."[46] The titles of Fisher's works alone, *Assertionis Lutheranae Confutatio*; *Defensio Regiae Assertionis*; *Sacri Sacerdotii Defensio*, give some indication of this. While these works were directed primarily at heresy on the continent, by 1525 England's defenders of the faith could no longer believe they were dealing only with a continental heresy. In 1525 was heard the first public proclamation of an English reformer to be accused of "Lutheranism."

Whether Barnes's sermon was indeed a proclamation of Luther's doctrine is debatable. The evidence against this suggestion must be taken seriously.[47] But so too must the interpretation of the evidence implicit in the reaction of Barnes's critics. The sermon itself was largely an unoriginal attack on ecclesiastical abuses, though it did not lack its own abusiveness: "I grant that I did offend in calling you ordinary bishops, for I should have called you inordinate butchers."[48] It was this sort of rhetoric, and, more importantly, the man at whom much of it was directed, that Barnes considered his undoing. Regarding his criticism of Wolsey he wrote, "I am sure that these words made me an heretic, for if these words had not been therein, mine adversaries durst never have showed their faces against me, but now they knew well that I could never be indifferently heard."[49]

Barnes, however, may have underestimated the objectivity of his accusers and even some of his defenders. Twenty years later Stephen Gardiner would remember:

> At the time of this accusation of Barnes, I was in service with my Lord Cardinal, of acquaintance with Barnes, and not accompted his enemy, and yet I thank God I never favoured such strange opinions as he and some other wantonly began to set forth; but because there was not then in them malice, and they maintained communication having some savour of learning, I was familiar with such sort of men, and was then sorry for Barnes, and glad to help him.[50]

Notably, Gardiner praises Barnes for his (presumably humanist) learning, yet dislikes certain opinions. These "strange opinions" may be evident in two of the articles on which Barnes was charged. He claimed that

> men should not in their petitions and prayers put their good works nor their good deeds and their merits and for them desire God to be merciful unto them, but they should desire the father of heaven to be merciful unto them only for Christ's merits, for they were the things whereby both we and our prayers were accepted in the sight of the father.[51]

He was also charged with "making no prayer to our lady, nor for the souls in purgatory."[52] In a different context this sermon may have aroused no suspicion; but in the midst of a national campaign against Luther, and in a pulpit from which another suspected sympathizer had been barred, it is not surprising that some heard heresy. In two further articles Barnes was charged with criticizing

indulgences. Again, that this would arouse suspicion in the wake of Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* can be safely assumed. It is also quite possible that his accusers already suspected what Foxe would later confirm, that Barnes preached "following the Scripture and Luther's Postil."[53] Within this context it was certainly not disingenuous of Fisher, who preached at Barnes's abjuration, to direct his homiletical attack "against Luther and Dr. Barnes."[54]

Bilney, the next year, would be examined under similar circumstances and would receive a similar response. Following Barnes's trial Bilney was made to swear that he would not teach the doctrines of Luther.[55] That Bilney considered Luther's condemnation just, that he never denied confession, transubstantiation, or papal primacy may indicate that he had no intention of promoting Luther's doctrine.[56] At his 1527 trial he was questioned for having criticized the invocation of saints and the veneration of images, disparaging pilgrimages, and questioning papal morality.[57] As was the case with Barnes's sermon, these criticisms could by themselves be compared to those raised by many humanist moral reformers.[58] Indeed, it has been noted that Barnes and Bilney said little that had not already been said by Colet.[59]

It may be true that the early Cambridge reformers were not first-rate theologians. But neither can they be seen simply as more zealous co-workers with the moral and educational reformers of their day.

The marginal notes in Bilney's Vulgate, however, indicate that on fundamental theological issues he was by this time out of step with the most prominent humanists. Erasmus, for example, was forced to disagree with Bilney's note on Genesis 3:5: "*Liberum arbitrium mendacium*."[60] And Fisher would have been scandalized by the suggestion that "*ecclesiam posse errare*."[61] Also noteworthy are the letters sent from Bilney to Bishop Tunstall as the former awaited trial. Here especially one might expect Bilney to emphasize his continuity with orthodox humanist reformers. Instead, he admitted that there had been no lack of preaching against vice; and yet he still feared "that the word of God hath not been purely preached."[62] He criticized those who preach repentance without also proclaiming forgiveness, and, by way of contrast, described his own sermons as "preaching of the cross."[63] Indeed, over against any moralizing tendencies, Bilney's letters emphasize faith alone in Christ alone.[64] Richard Rex exaggerates only slightly when he claims that these letters are "drenched in evangelical catchphrases," and not at all when noting that their contents are "manifestly evangelical rather than Erasmian."[65]

It is undoubtedly for this reason that Bilney's examiners gave as much attention to specifically "Lutheran" doctrines as to the less offensive comments culled from his sermons.[66] He was asked whether Luther had been justly condemned, whether popes, councils, or the church could err, and whether man was endowed with free will. His opinion was also requested on the granting of indulgences. Bilney maintained that they undermine faith in Christ alone.[67] It is unsurprising in this context that his examiners, as had Barnes's, proceeded against the opinions of Bilney and Luther together.[68]

The remains of John Frith point even more explicitly to reforms with a theological agenda. Under the tutelage of Stephen Gardiner at Cambridge, Frith had gained a reputation for good letters; it was presumably this reputation which in 1525 prompted Cardinal Wolsey to make him a junior canon at his new Oxford college.[69] Upon taking up residence, Frith and others began what under different circumstances may have been tolerated, "conferring together upon the abuses of religion."[70] But, after the book scandal of 1528 unfolded, Oxford would lament that Luther's heresy was there introduced by "certain of the Cantabrigians," Frith included.[71]

In the case of Frith, however, one need not rely on the accusations of others to discern his motives. Two of his works were published in 1529, each clearly displaying the nature of his early sympathies. The first was a translation of Patrick Hamilton's theses on justification by faith, described by Frith as having "the pith of all divinity."[72] While the subject of Hamilton's theses owed much to the theology of Wittenberg, Frith's next publication was even more indebted to this source. *The Revelation of Antichrist*, as it was titled, consisted of an introductory treatise written by Frith himself, followed by two anti-papal works: a translation of Luther's *Revelation of Antichrist* and an edited translation of Philip Melanchthon's *Passional Christi und Antichristi*. Even Frith's original treatise bears the unmistakable imprint of Luther. In it he relied upon Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, through which he would also have become acquainted with Luther's prefaces.[73] It is perhaps through these that he gained the appreciation for distinguishing law and gospel evident in his statement that "when we perceive that we cannot fulfil his will . . . we are at hell['s] gates, and truly should fall into utter desperation, except God did bring us again, showing us his gospel and promise."[74] Likewise, his opinion that "It is not therefore sufficient to believe that he is a Saviour and Redeemer, but that he is a Saviour and Redeemer unto thee" bears remarkable similarity to the opening of Luther's 1519 *Meditation on Christ's Passion*: "Of what help is it to you that God is God, if he is not God to you?"[75]

It may be true that the early Cambridge reformers were not first-rate theologians.[76] But neither can they be seen simply as more zealous co-workers with the moral and educational reformers of their day. Indeed, Fisher himself refused to acknowledge any points of agreement between the humanism he advocated and the more radical agendas of the unorthodox reformers.[77] Though they were, to various degrees, enamored of classical learning, it is impossible to explain away the fact that England's most prominent advocates of humanism not only preached and wrote against Luther, but also against Bilney, Barnes, and Frith; and on the same basis. It would be too simple to label this basis Lutheranism; the Cambridge men were not, either individually or as a group, consistently Lutheran during the 1520s.[78] But the suggestion that only the common emphases of Luther and Erasmus allowed the former a place in England seems indefensible.[79] The observation of

H.C. Porter, that the reformers of the 1520s "parted company with Erasmus where Erasmus parted company with Luther," is certainly more in keeping with the evidence.[80] It may even be said, as Carl Trueman has argued, that it was the evangelical doctrine of Luther that "changed them from Catholic Humanists to Protestant Reformers."[81] And it was the doctrine of Luther that authorities were quick to condemn, whether promoted by books or by men.

What, then, was the part played by Cambridge in the development and definition of the early Reformation in England? As there is little evidence that the Cambridge men made a concerted effort to reach a predetermined goal, it is fair to say that in these early years they had "no clear line of common action."[82] This is not to say, however, that they did not make significant, and similar, contributions to the early Reformation. Most significantly, those associated with the university introduced and disseminated the ideas of Luther. This inevitably took place in the distribution of imported Lutheran literature. It was done intentionally in the early publications of Frith. Though perhaps less blatantly, it also occurred in the preaching of Bilney and Barnes. Even Fisher's early sermon against Luther, along with the treatises that quoted his words in order to denounce them, would provide the German reformer with an English audience. This introduction, dissemination, and public debate of Luther's thought, in both academic and popular circles,[83] may be described as the part the Cambridge men played in the early development of the English Reformation. Not unrelated is the part they played in the definition of this Reformation. In the sermons, trials, and treatises of the 1520s two of Luther's emphases became especially highlighted: justification by faith and the power of the papacy.[84] The acceptance of the former was the foundation on which others would begin to build England's theological Reformation. The rejection of the latter would soon inaugurate the political Reformation.

NOTES

1. J. P. Whitney, "Reformation Literature in England," in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. 3, *Renascence and Reformation*, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932): 28.

2. By use of the term "early" I mean to limit enquiry to the years before 1530, the year in which Cambridge became involved in the matter of the king's divorce, issuing a verdict on 9 March. Regarding Henry's request that the university do so, one author writes, "It is quite feasible to regard this as the opening episode of the English Reformation." E. Doernberg, *Henry VIII and Luther: An Account of their Personal Relations* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1961), 69.

3. H. C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 60.

4. W. A. Clebsch, *England's Earliest Protestants, 1520–1535* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press,1964), 42.

5. Clebsch, 26.

6. A third thesis, sometimes forwarded, suggests a relationship between the Cambridge reformers and the moral and theological emphases of the Lollards. For an all too brief consideration of this thesis, see notes 58, 66 and 68 on Thomas Bilney, the reformer most open to charges of Lollardy.

7. Whitney, 28.

8. John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments of John Foxe* [hereafter *A&M*], ed. J. Pratt, 8 vols. (London: Religious Tract Society, 1877), 5: 99.

9. E. G. Rupp, *Studies in the Making of the English Protestant Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), 27.

10. Porter, xiv.

11. D. L. Leader, *A History of the University of Cambridge*, vol. 1, *The University to 1546* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 246; D. L. Leader, "Professorships and Academic Reform at Cambridge: 1488–1520," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 14 (1983): 217, 227.

12. Desiderius Erasmus, *The Collected Works of Erasmus* [hereafter *CWE*], ed. R. J. Schoeck and B. Corrigan, 84 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974–), 4:449.

13. *CWE*, 5: 730.

14. Thomas More, *St. Thomas More: Selected Letters*, ed. E. F. Rogers (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961), 19 [60].

15. Leader, *A History*, 314; see also 267.

16. M. Dowling, *Fisher of Men: A Life of John Fisher, 1469–1535* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 23.

17. Quoted by Dowling, *Fisher*, 40.

18. R. Rex, *The Theology of John Fisher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1.

19. Leader, *A History*, 321. Rather than simply maintaining orthodoxy despite curricular reform, it has been argued that the reforming statutes were specifically instituted for the sake of promoting and defending orthodoxy. See J. McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 78; see also M. Dowling, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 78–80.

20. *A&M*, 5: 415.

21. *A&M*, 4: 635. See *CWE*, 3: 388 and 4: 540.

22. See John Frith, *The Work of John Frith* [hereafter *WJF*], ed. N.T. Wright (London: Sutton Courtenay, 1978), 4.

23. Leader, *A History*, 306, 317. See also R. Rex, "The Early Impact of Reformation Theology at Cambridge University, 1521–1547," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 2 (1999): 52; Rex, *The Theology*, 79; McConica, 89.

24. See the reviews of McConica's work in *Historical Journal* 10 (1967): 137–138, and *History* 52 (1967): 77–78.

25. *CWE*, 5: 785.

26. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, ed. J. S. Brewer, J. Gairdner, and R. H. Brodie, 23 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1862–1932), 1: 1233.

27. *CWE*, 7: 1102.

28. *A&M*, 5: 416.

29. *A&M*, 5: 27; Porter, 45.

30. It has also been suggested that Forman was "at the center of the book trade" which led to the arrests of Geoffrey Lome, Richard Bayfield, Henry Monmouth, and John Tewksbury. See P. Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1990), 496, 498.

31. Foxe puts Garret in Oxford as early as 1526; *A&M*, 5: 421. Though Garret was an Oxford graduate and was later residing in London, it has been suggested that he also spent some time in Cambridge. V. H. H. Green, *Religion at Oxford and Cambridge* (London: SCM, 1964), 87. See the articles against Garret in *A&M*, 5, App. 6.

32. The list is to be found in *A&M*, 5, App. 6.

33. *A&M*, 5, App. 6 (Longland to Wolsey, 3 March 1528), spelling modernized.

34. *A&M*, 5, App. 6 (Longland to Wolsey, 3 March 1528).

35. *A&M*, 5, App. 6 (London to Longland, 26 February 1528), spelling modernized.

36. *A&M*, 5, App. 6 (Longland to Wolsey, 3 March 1528).

37. *A&M*, 5, App. 6 (London to Longland, 26 February 1528). It is worth noting that previously, in 1521, Cambridge was also accused of introducing the continental heresy at Oxford. See *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, 3rd ser., ed. H. Ellis, 4 vols. (London: R. Bentley, 1846), 1: 239.

38. See Rex, "The Early Impact," 49.

39. E. Rummel, *The Confessionalization of Humanism in Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5. Rummel refers specifically to the case in Germany, but her observation is no less true of England.

40. Quoted by Rummel, 23.

41. See *CWE*, 7: 1033.

42. C. W. D'Alton, "The Suppression of Heresy in Early Henrician England" (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1999), 121. See John Fisher, *The English Works of John Fisher*, ed. J. E. B. Mayor (London: Early English Text Society, 1876), 339–46.

43. D'Alton, 107.

44. Rex, "The Early Impact," 42.

45. Dowling, *Fisher*, 107.

46. D'Alton, 127.

47. See Clebsch, 45–46; C. Trueman, *Luther's Legacy: Salvation and English Reformers, 1525–1556* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 50–51; D. Loades, "Martin Luther and the Early Stages of the English Reformation," in *Politics, Censorship and the English Reformation*, ed. D. Loades (London: Pinter, 1991): 151; N. S. Tjernagel, *Henry VIII and the Lutherans: A Study in Anglo-Lutheran Relations from 1521 to 1547* (St.

Louis: Concordia, 1965), 43–44, 50, 54.

48. See Barnes's recollection of his sermon and trial in Robert Barnes, *A Supplicatyon unto Henry VIII* [hereafter *Supplicatyon*] (n.p., n.d. [Antwerp, 1531]), fol. 29v [spelling modernized in all quotations].

49. *Supplicatyon*, fol. 33v.

50. Quoted by J. A. Muller, *Stephen Gardiner and the Tudor Reaction* (London: SPCK, 1926), 14–15.

51. *Supplicatyon*, fol. 35r.

52. *Supplicatyon*, fol. 35v.

53. *A&M*, 5: 415.

54. *A&M*, 5: 418.

55. See *A&M*, 4: 622.

56. *A&M*, 4: 625–626. This confession was made under interrogation and should perhaps therefore be taken with a grain of salt.

57. *A&M*, 4: 627–628.

58. Such criticisms might also be compared to the earlier emphases of Wyclif. One author refers to them matter-of-factly as "the Wycliffite articles," forwarding the argument that "Bylney was closer to the Lollards than he was to Luther." J. F. Davis, "The Trials of Thomas Bylney and the English Reformation," *The Historical Journal* 24 (1981): 776, 777. But see notes 66 and 68 below.

59. S. Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 70–71; Clebsch, 45.

60. J. Y. Batley, *On a Reformer's Latin Bible: Being an Essay on the* Adversaria *in the Vulgate of Thomas Bilney* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell and Co., 1940), 38.

61. Batley, 36.

62. *A&M*, 4: 637.

63. *A&M*, 4: 640.

64. See *A&M*, 4: 635–636.

65. Rex, "The Early Impact," 51.

66. See *A&M*, 4: 624–625. Even Davis, who is primarily concerned with distancing Bilney from Luther, notes that many of the charges brought against him "clearly relate to the reception of Lutheranism." Davis, 777.

67. *A&M*, 4: 626.

68. *A&M*, 4: 622. What is surprising is that during Bilney's trial no attention was given to those articles most resembling Lollard belief. Davis, 777, attempts to explain this fact by suggesting that "the judges had partially prejudged the issue;" that is, they had already judged Bilney a "Lutheran" before a detailed examination of the articles brought against him. This is certainly possible. It is equally possible, and perhaps even more likely, that upon examination, the judges found it easier to reconcile Bilney's moderate iconophobia with their understanding of Lutheranism than to reconcile his confession of transubstantiation with Lollardy. In either case the point still stands that Bilney's sermons were perceived as proclamations of Lutheran ideas. They were understood as such by his accusers; it is therefore not unreasonable to assume that some of his supporters reached the same conclusion.

69. See *WJF*, 6.

70. *A&M*, 5: 5.

71. *Original Letters*, 1: 243, 244; see also *A&M*, 5, App. 6 (Longland to Wolsey, 3 March 1528).

72. *WJF*, 476.

73. *WJF*, 556, n. 22.

74. *WJF*, 461–462.

75. *WJF*, 460; Martin Luther, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. T. F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 166.

76. Clebsch, 2.

77. Clebsch, 18.

78. Rex, "The Early Impact," 52.

79. See B. Hall, "The Early Rise and Gradual Decline of Lutheranism in England (1520–1600)," in *Reform and Reformation: England and the Continent c.1500–c.1750,* ed. D. Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979): 113.

80. Porter, 60.

81. Trueman, 6.

82. Porter, 60; see note 3 above.

83. In contrast to the private reading that had even earlier taken place, for example, among the German immigrants of the London Steelyard.

84. These emphases are especially highlighted in the matter of indulgences, a topic addressed in the sermons of Bilney and Barnes and in the *Revelation* of Frith. Also, it is not insignificant that Frith's first publication concerned justification and his second the papacy.

Reviews

"*It is not many books that make men learned . . . but it is a good book frequently read.*"
Martin Luther

Recovering Mother Kirk: The Case for Liturgy in the Reformed Tradition. By D. G. Hart. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003. 263 pages.

This book is a compilation of previously published articles, which deal with the role of Reformed liturgy in the culture of American evangelicalism. Dr. Hart writes, "If there is one purpose that unites this book, it is an effort to show that the Reformed and Presbyterian wing of Protestantism is more liturgical and churchly than it is pietistic and evangelical . . ." (15). This review will evaluate Hart's claim from a Lutheran perspective.

In the first chapter, Hart promotes an identity that he calls "High Church Presbyterianism." Later in the book he provides historical insight into the shaping of evangelicalism and how it found its way into all of Protestantism, especially Presbyterianism. The First Great Awakening featured the influential preacher, George Whitefield. Whitefield helped to mold the evangelical ethos in America by preaching emotional sermons for the purpose of true conversion. Since the time of Whitefield, the spirit of Revivalism has infiltrated the church with an introspective dynamic, which has produced an experiential theology void of the means of grace. Hart notes that this new approach to theology spread even to the realm of academia, where many of the Old Princetonians welcomed the innovations of Whitefield (191–192).

During the Second Great Awakening, Charles Finney continued to focus on individual conversions with highly charged preaching and altar calls (211). The results of a spirituality that is based on introspection and vast conversion continue to plague American evangelicalism. Practices such as Church Growth and the rise of contemporary Christian music find their roots in the revivalism of the First and Second Great Awakening.

Hart promotes an alternative to this individualistic approach to spirituality, which is a piety that stems from the functions of the church, namely, word and sacrament. Presbyterians propose what is called the Regulative Principle, which states that the corporate worship of the church must consist only of those elements that are explicitly stated in Scripture. The historic church calendar is therefore replaced with the Reformed calendar, which consists of a six-day workweek culminating in the seventh day of rest, on which the church gathers to worship (31–32). The purpose for Christians gathering on the Sabbath is to hear the word preached and to participate in the sacramental life of the covenant community.

According to Hart, New Testament worship is characterized by the principle of simplicity because the church now lives in the age of the Spirit. Ceremonies and outward forms do not characterize worship in the New Covenant. Word and sacrament are the hallmarks of this heavenly worship, where the believer partakes of Christ's spiritual body and blood. These sacraments have a past, present, and future reality. Hart notes,

> As significant as baptism and the Lord's Supper are, the elements of water, bread, and wine hardly compare with the grandeur of the exodus, the Passover, the judgment day, or glory. The Sacraments, then, illustrate perfectly the simplicity of worship in the age of the Holy Spirit. By outward appearances they have little appeal or majesty, but through the work of the Spirit, these sacraments become signs and seals of what Christ has accomplished for his people and of the unity that exists between Christ and his church (98–99).

The idea of a Regulative Principle presupposes that Scripture dictates a particular blueprint for worship. It is true that Scripture warns of syncretistic practices and a casual approach to the worship of God. The student of Scripture is well aware of the warning given to the church in Corinth regarding those who were partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily by not rightly discerning the body and blood. Does Scripture, however, condemn the use of the church calendar and various physical objects that convey the redemptive story? The antidote that Hart proposes in order to combat the individualistic disease of American evangelicalism seems to be insufficient for the task. The Reformed zeal to regulate everything according to Scripture goes beyond Luther's understanding of *sola scriptura*. Luther did not promote biblicism but a churchly piety with its final authority founded upon Holy Writ. The theme and purpose of Scripture was to lead one to faith in Jesus Christ, not to promote a handbook of worship practices.

Curiously Hart entitled his book, *Recovering Mother Kirk*. This title reflects his desire to restore the distinctive characteristics of Presbyterianism from its homeland in Scotland. The student acquainted with Presbyterian history, however, must wonder if Scotland provides an adequate model for Reformed practices that are churchly and liturgical. Hart admits,

> The Scottish Presbyterian practice of communion seasons, as historians have recently argued, in which churches admin-

> istered the Supper only two to four times a year and did so with a week of festivities leading up to the sacrament, also worked enthusiastical leaven into the lump of Presbyterian practice. Those festivities soon evolved into camp meetings and revivals at which the excitement of receiving the Spirit overwhelmed the experience of receiving the benefits of Christ in the Supper (35).

This begs the question, why would returning to Mother Kirk be a good thing? Lutherans are well aware that any time the Lord's Supper was denigrated it was usually bound to a sacramental theology that was characteristic of the Reformed Confessions rather than their own. Hart might want to rethink this title in light of what really took place in Scotland, even during the days of John Knox.

The final point regarding Hart's book concerns chapter twelve, which is entitled, "What Can Presbyterians Learn from Lutherans." This chapter is devoted to the way in which Lutherans uphold a theology of the cross instead of a theology of glory. Hart is very complimentary of the insights found in Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation* of 1518. He appreciates the focus of Luther in not seeking a mandate to transform culture. He points out the problems of the Dutch Reformed theologian and politician, Abraham Kuyper, who believed it was the duty of Christians to extend God's reign over culture. Hart suggests that Calvin was much closer to Luther on this point because, "According to Calvin, the Christian life is a pilgrimage filled with suffering and defeat" (174). A problem occurs, however, when Hart then quotes the hymn attributed to Calvin entitled "I Greet Thee Who My Sure Redeemer Art":

> Our hope is in no other save in thee;
> Our faith is built upon thy promise free;
> O grant to us such stronger hope and sure;
> That we can boldly conquer and endure.

Hart explains, "Here is a different picture of Calvinism, not one of the triumphant crusader conquering the world for Christ and his kingdom but rather one of the suffering pilgrim who endures pain and persecution"(174). One wonders how Hart reached such a conclusion. The goal of the Christian life, according to Calvin, is to "boldly conquer." This does not reflect Luther's understanding of the theology of the Cross. This idea flows from a theology of glory. Calvin's acknowledgement of the believer's life being a pilgrimage filled with suffering is admirable, but the Genevan reformer failed to grasp that the Christian will never conquer anything in the present life. Faith does not conquer but trusts in the finished work of Christ at the cross. The Christian pilgrimage, therefore, does not seek to conquer but to receive the benefits of the Lord's death and resurrection given through the means of grace.

Despite some of the Reformed positions, this reviewer recommends Hart's book due to its valuable insight into the state of the American evangelical movement. Hart successfully argues and defends his point that there is a legitimate distinction between Presbyterianism and modern evangelicalism. To be Reformed means that one must subscribe to those particular confessions and worship in a way that reflects those theological distinctives. This is a lesson not only for Presbyterians but for confessional Lutheranism as well. This book represents fine scholarship and will provide a useful resource for anyone desiring to understand the beliefs and practices found in both evangelical and Reformed systems of theology.

Wade Miller
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Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Luke. Edited by Arthur A. Just Jr. General editor, Thomas C. Oden. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003.

For quite some time, the church has suffered from a case of self-inflicted amnesia. Some within the Protestant tradition tend to think that the church began at the time of Luther and Calvin, while others focus on the Council of Trent or Vatican II. Much biblical scholarship thrives on novelty. Worship services, shaped by our culture of entertainment, demonstrate that there is little connection between the "contemporary" church and that of the Apostles. In such a context, Thomas C. Oden's *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* is a breath of fresh air. The aim of this series is to enable our own generation to sit at the feet of our fathers so that we can read the Scriptures alongside of them and learn from their insights. It seeks to bring together Christians in the present by uniting them to their past.

After years of failed and even harmful endeavors to promote church unity at the cost of truth, this series is ecumenical in the best sense of the term. Catholics, Evangelicals, and Lutherans alike have seen how the church has been ravaged by modernism and postmodernism, and within almost every denomination there are those who hunger for theology that is real and substantial. Thomas Oden has gathered a group of like-minded theologians, who have endeavored to make the church fathers accessible to today's pastors and serious Christians. On the book jacket Oden puts it this way:

> The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture is an ecumenical project, promoting a vital link of communication between today's varied Christian traditions and their common ancient ancestors in the faith. On this shared ground we listen as leading pastoral theologians of the church's first several centuries gather around the text of Scripture and offer their best theological, spiritual, and pastoral insights.

The format of the twenty-eight-volume series is as follows. There is a continuous reading of Scripture, divided by pericopes. Following each pericope, the editor provides an overview and summary, and then there follow quotes from the Fathers on various points.

It should be stressed that the ACCS is an edited series, not simply a compilation. As such, the quotations chosen do reflect the interests of the editors. As one would expect, the fathers commented much more extensively on some biblical books than others. Some volumes consequently are more helpful than others. Naturally, owning this series is not a substitute for reading the fathers on their own. At times, the quotations are too short

to be of much aid. Further, if you think that the fathers have "answers" for every exegetical problem, this series will disabuse you of such a romantic notion. At times you will find that a father's exegetical insights are as pedestrian as our own. Other times, you will find that the fathers use the texts not as the basis for their meditations, but as launching points, from which they happily meander from one point to another. In still other places, you will find the fathers conflating texts. For instance, in Cyril's sermon on Luke, he comments on the fact that Jesus was "sorrowful and troubled," a fact mentioned not in Luke, but in Matthew. Thus, following Cyril in this case may actually blur the distinctive message of each gospel. In a similar vein, the ACCS may encourage the reader to lump "the Fathers" together as if they were interchangeable. On the positive side, this series is an antidote to the prevailing trend that pits the scriptural authors against each other and fails to recognize that there is in fact a recognizable theological unity among the fathers.

Among the best volumes in the series thus far is Arthur A. Just's *Luke*. Just, author of the Concordia Commentary on Luke, was well suited for the task. He combines exegetical, theological, liturgical, and historical acumen to serve as an able and insightful guide through the fathers. Time and again, Just leads us to passages in the fathers that demonstrate the Christ-centered, sacramental meaning of the Scriptures. For instance, in his commentary on the feeding of the five thousand, Cyril commented that Jesus is himself the Bread of Life (153), and Ambrose understood it to be a sign that "The future distribution of the Lord's body and blood is based in the ministry of the Apostles," (152). From perusing this volume, one can see how the fathers understood the gospel of Luke to have grown organically from the Old Testament. For instance, in his exposition on the baptism of Jesus, Ambrose remarks that the dove points at once to Noah's Ark and to Christ himself (67). In their exposition of Jesus' temptation, both Origen and Ambrose see Jesus as the New Adam (73). Other examples could be multiplied many times over.

Above all, one senses from reading Just's volume that the church fathers read the Scriptures pastorally. In an age in which the biblical scholars have turned the Scriptures into quasi-scientific documents, this volume once again reclaims the Scriptures for the church. For pastors and future pastors, Just's *Luke* is a must, and will serve as a reference guide throughout one's ministry.

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Briefly Noted

On Christian Liberty. By Martin Luther. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002.

Luther's 1520 treatise on the freedom of the Christian has been lifted from the American Edition of Luther's Works and published in booklet form suitable for use in congregational study groups. A short introduction by Roy Harrisville III provides historical background and ongoing significance of this foundational Reformation tract in which Luther defines Christian freedom in terms of faith and love.

Baptism in the Refor med Tradition: An Historical and Practical Theology. By John W. Riggs. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

John Riggs, associate professor of historical theology at Eden Seminary in St. Louis, traces the historical development, theological motifs, and pastoral application of baptism in the Reformed tradition with Zwingli and culminating in the current Presbyterian Church USA text, *The Book of Common Worship* (1993). Using both this book and the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, Riggs observes how traditional themes are modified or omitted in current liturgical rites. For example, Riggs argues that "something was lost from Luther that was central to his theology and baptismal theology" in the *LBW* rite (15). The central datum for the *LBW* rite, according to Riggs, is not "the existentially present God" but the community's own narrative about itself in relation to God. This provocative study is well worth reading in light of current discussions on the nature of liturgical theology and practice.

Creation. By Han Schwarz. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

Hans Schwarz, formerly of Trinity Lutheran Seminary (Columbus) and now of the University of Regensberg, addresses the doctrine of creation in dialogue with modern science. The value of this book lies more in its summary of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment engagements of theology with the natural sciences than it does in the exposition of the doctrine of creation.

Freedom as Love in Martin Luther. Edited by Dennis Biefeldt and Klaus Schwarzwaeller. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995.

This collection of seminar papers presented at the Eighth International Congress for Luther Research that met in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1993 explores Luther's understanding of Christian freedom. A programmatic essay by Tuomo Manermaa introduces the volume. Dennis Bielfeldt shows how Luther develops freedom, love, and righteousness in his 1519 *Sermo de Duplici Iustitia*. Turning to Luther's Psalms lectures of 1519–1521, Hubertus Blaumeiser examines freedom and confession. Bernhard Erling reviews Luther's understanding of the place of the law in conversion. Two separate essays by George Forell and Egil Grislis look at the 1520 "Treatise on Good Works." Eric Gritsch takes up the theme from Luther's preaching on Galatians. Robert Jenson approaches *The Bondage of the Will* as a systematic theologian concluding that "human freedom in the only sense Luther wants

to talk about, is nothing less than participation in God's own triune rapture of freedom" (118). Aleksander Radler tackles the problem of obedience in Luther's understanding of freedom. Klaus Schwarzwaeller looks at freedom as love in Luther's exposition of the ten commandments. Jane Strohl offers a commentary on Luther's "Invocavit sermons" of March 1522 demonstrating how faith, freedom, and love are hallmarks of Luther's evangelical preaching in this crisis situation. Rainer Vinke treats Luther's use of 1 Corinthians 13. This fine anthology will serve as a useful guide to those interested in probing the Reformer's thinking on vocation, ethics, and the Christian life.

Life's Worth: The Case Against Assisted Suicide. By Arthur J. Dyck. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

Dyck, the Mary B. Saltonstall Professor of Population Ethics at the Harvard School of Public Health, explores and defends the long tradition that assisted suicide is unacceptable. Offering a careful and tightly reasoned critique of current arguments for assisted suicide and euthanasia, Dyck maintains that "comfort only care" is compatible with the Christian ethic while assisted suicide and euthanasia undermine the moral structure of life's worth and dehumanize the dying.

JTP+

Logia Forum

Short Studies and Commentary

Disposable Crosses

They might be made with partially burned matchsticks, or uncooked macaroni spray-painted with gold paint. They might be constructed from paper and covered with glitter. Whatever the medium, representations of the blessed cross of our Lord Jesus Christ often find themselves in the Sunday afternoon wastebasket with the coffee grounds and the used Kleenex.

Children in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School often are directed to occupy the hour allotted to them with something called "crafts"—something falling decidedly short of art—presumably because they cannot absorb much teaching. I have yet to discover how the production of disposable crosses, crowns, and creches is supposed to nurture them towards a mature faith, hope and love. Do we really have nothing better for our children in their formative years?

In some cases, adults fare no better. In every community where the congregation's liturgy is printed out for "ease of use" and the Holy Scripture is photocopied so that everyone can "follow along," there must be a county landfill peppered with paper which for a brief hour had a sacred use.

What has prompted our modern infatuation with printouts still eludes me. I prefer a well-bound book to flimsy papers. I see no reason why Bibles cannot be put into pew racks and corresponding page numbers put into the bulletins for the reading of the Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel so that Christ's dear people can still have the sensation of actually cracking opening a Bible, or perhaps they might even be prompted to buy and bring their own, knowing exactly where in their home they can find one.

Try as I might not to trash that precious symbol of the justification won for me by my Lord's bitter suffering and death, my refrigerator door can only hold so much. The stacks of once-used bulletins may soon rival the square-footage of my saved issues of National Geographic (I am not sure what to do with those either—they seem more difficult to throw those away than the Xeroxed Divine Services I get each week).

Perhaps it would be better if I would recycle, but it is still difficult for me to think of this Sunday's propers and Proverbs 3:1–6, Ephesians 4:7–16, and Matthew 9:9–13 being reincarnated into the swimsuit issue of *Sports Illustrated* or super-absorbent paper towels. What about you?

JAB

Communing with Caesar

Werner Elert's chapter "Attempts at Union" in his book Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries (*St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966*), *describes the early church which "genuinely suffered under its divisions." In numerous instances, the reigning Cæsar got involved, having a keen interest in the church's internal harmony. Where doctrinal unanimity was lacking, Cæsar resorted to force, sometimes cloaked under an offer of union. The following excerpt comes from pages 197–198 of Norman E. Nagel's translation.*

From this it would seem that there is need of some correction in the widely held view of history which sees the orthodox teachers of the church as murderous men who knew only how to wound the body of Christ with their everlasting hairsplitting, while Cæsar on the other hand was the merciful Samaritan who put things together again with his unionizing skill and disregard of the cost incurred (Luke 10:35). The first is simply not true, and the second can only show some semblance of truth if we look with only a political or church-political eye.

Caesar's efforts to unify the church are far from inconsequential. When he was content to play the role of straightforward intermediary like Mundar, great service was rendered the church which it could accept without denying itself and its mission. Matters changed when Caesar moved into the role of arbiter. This meant in practice that the hope of coming to agreement within the church was sacrificed for a settlement by force. The favored party (now more and more called Catholic in a confessional sense) in this way came into the monopoly formerly enjoyed by the heathen state religion. All other Christians were thus put into the position of the church in the times of the persecutions before Constantine.

The use of force against Christians before Constantine was stigmatized and abominated as characteristic of a heathen understanding of the state. Now it was not only conceded to Caesar but even made his Christian duty by the privileged church party because, or insofar as, force was not applied to itself, and because and insofar as the use of force was found to be advantageous.

The orthodox party was not alone in this, although they won the final victory with Theodosius. Things were no better under the Arian emperors. In the following century in the East we find the new parties taking turnabout in the seat of power and privilege. It is not our business to blame the one or commiserate with the other, but rather to weigh the profound perversion of the church which took place here.

Caesar's frontal attacks on the church have done it less harm than his help in putting his instruments of power at the church's disposal. The lust for power did not here make its first entry into the church—it was at work there already long since—but it was here enormously propagated. Worst of all, it was called up from its former shameful dark allies and brazenly invested with sacred honor. It was even enlisted in the service of theological persuasion. Whoever has the power has the truth. The weak are branded by God Himself. And so we have arrived at the opposite of that gospel with which the church first took its way into the world. It has here lost sight of what God has in mind for it and for the things of this earth.

The efforts at union by coercion belong in the same bundle with the methods employed in getting rid of those who enjoyed neither privilege nor concession. We have seen how they would both so arrange the church that disunity would be no more, a consummation which since the days of the apostles has been incessantly striven for with zealous concern and profound theological labor. There was disagreement about what was essential to the unity of the church and in what points differences are tolerable.

Irenaeus did not see eye to eye here with the Victor of Rome. One thing there was no disagreement about, at least before the onset of coercive unions, and that was that of all criteria confessional unity came first. No church fellowship could be countenanced where there was disunity in confessing the faith. Wherever there is disagreement, the word is to be employed in refuting, teaching, and persuading, but wherever it falls short of its uniting goal, there can be no holy communion together. At times exclusions are necessary. Exclusion is a bitter thing for both sides, but it is not necessarily a resort to force. Even when full schism emerges, both parties can yet live outwardly at peace with each other. This does not necessarily indicate indifference, nor does it call for the "modern concept of tolerance."

The Church in a Pagan Culture

Christian evangelists and apologetes have wrestled over the centuries with the use of pagan literature. E. K. Rand's book, Founders of the Middle Ages (*New York: Dover Publications, 1957, the reprinting of a 1928 Harvard work*)*, gives an interesting survey of these views which include the views of men running the gamut from Tertullian to Boethius. Rand advocated "a return to the ancients—not to their polytheism but to their theory of education" because it laid the groundwork for the transmission of Classical culture to the Middle Ages and was a fore-runner of the humanism that served Martin Luther well. A classical Lutheran educational renaissance is growing in some quarters these days, too. This portion comes from pages 35–38.*

St. Paul may have been a Pharisee. Dr. Paul Elmer More calls his theology Rabbinical. Perhaps it is; I am no judge. But I rather think that Dr. More is a bit hard on St. Paul—not so much, however, in his second volume as in his first; the influence of the Apostle is insidious. We should reckon not only with St. Paul's Rabbinical training, but with his reading of the Greek authors. His ability to make such appropriate citation from two of the less conspicuous poets like Aratus and Cleanthes indicates that he had roamed rather widely in the field of Greek literature. In fact, we find in the letters of St. Paul verses from Menander and Epimenides the Cretan, and possibly a bit of Aristotle. Such reading effects a man's outlook on life. In St. Paul's temperament and his methods of winning his audiences, I see something Greek. I wonder, when we consider his voyages and his mind, that nobody has given him the title of a Christian Odysseus, *polytropos*, a man of subtle twists and turns, all things to all men, with of course a difference. St. Paul became all things to all men in the hope that he might save some. Odysseus became all things to all men in the hope that he might save Odysseus. But St. Paul is just as agile, just as infallibly alive to the requirements of the moment. When he talks to the Athenians he is Greek. He is just as fittingly Jewish in his defence before King Agrippa, whom he knew to be "expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews." I doubt not that, if St. Paul were alive today and preached to a Boston audience, he would, in the fashion of our most liberal divines, choose a text from the Swami Vivikanda or Rabindranath Tagore, prefacing the quotation with the words "as certain also of your own prophets have said. . . ."

Now, although St. Paul quoted the Stoic Cleanthes, Christianity is not Stoicism—even though two Scandinavians have recently pronounced St. Paul's famous chapter on faith, hope,

and charity a Christian Stoic diatribe. Of all the ancient philosophies, Christianity is most nearly allied to Platonism, though it is not that. The leaders of the Church, at any rate, could not help recognizing that many doctrines had been proclaimed by wise men of old, such as the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, that compared admirably with their own traditions. The matter is best summed up by St. Augustine, who had lived through all the schools and spoke of what he knew.

> There came into my hands [he says] certain of the books of the Platonists and I read there, with other words but the like meaning, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life and the life was the light of men."

St. Augustine thus goes through the prologue to the Gospel of St. John for the parts that he finds Platonic, and then adds, "But that this word was made flesh and dwelt among us, that read I not there." In the same way, he sifts Platonic teaching from the words of St. Paul. The upshot is that it is the doctrine of the Incarnation that according to St. Augustine, as to Dr. More, is at the heart of the Christian faith.

Here then is the problem that confronted the Church. With its new revelation, it must break off from the past, but how could it break from a past that agreed at so many points with its own revelation? The wider the Church spread, the more intimate its contacts became with the more cultivated portions of society—the better classes. A new form of defence or apologetics was required, less attack and more negotiation, a reasoned endeavor to convince the cultured that the new faith contained something worth their attention.

a more thorough understanding of the history, difficulties, true genius, and triumphs of the Reformation will be attained, than by reading everything that can be got, or that has ever been written about that memorable movement. It is, indeed, too much the fashion now to read about things, to the neglect of the great original sources themselves.

In general literature much is written and read about Homer and Shakespeare, until these great poets attract less attention than their critics. In theology it is the prevailing practice to have students read introductions to the Bible, and essays on various features of it, to such a degree that the Bible itself, except in an indirect form, is hardly studied at all, and the student, though often introduced to it, never fairly makes its acquaintance. All these illustrative works, if well executed, have their value; but that value presupposes such a general acquaintance with the books to which they serve as a guide, as is formed by every man for himself who carefully examines them.

The greatest value of every work of the human mind, after all, generally lies in that which needs no guide, no critic, no commentator. Their labors may display more clearly, and thus enhance, this value, and are not to be despised; but their subject is greater than themselves, and they are useful only when they lead to an accurate and critical knowledge of that with which a general acquaintance has been formed by personal examination.

It is now conceded, for example, that in the order of nature the general knowledge of language must precede an accurate, grammatical acquaintance with it. They may be formed indeed together, part preceding part, but if they must be separated, the general is better than the scientific. If, in a library, there were two cases, one containing all the Latin grammars and the other all the Latin classics, and one boy was kept six years to the classics and another six years to the grammars, the first would understand the language practically, the second would understand nothing, not even the grammar.

Upon Closer Examination

In the same spirit as "Read the Bible: It sheds a lot of light on the commentaries," Charles Porterfield Krauth commented on the importance of reading the primary sources. From Conservative Reformation, *pages 204–205.*

The tone which is imparted to the mind and heart, by the theology of the Reformation, is just what we now most need. But where are we to commence, it may be asked, in the infinite variety of works that have been written about the Reformation and its theology? "Art is long and life is fleeting." [*Ars longa, breva vita.* Horace] And how is the clergyman to find the books, or buy them when found, or read them when bought, destitute, as he is too wont to be, alike of money and time? We reply, that an immense treasure lies in a narrow compass, and within the reach of every minister in our land.

By a careful study of the symbolical books of our church, commencing with the Augsburg Confession and its Apology,

Uncommon Language

Prior to the two-volume translation of Martin Chemnitz's Loci Theologici *in 1989, J. A. O. Preus made certain sections available in a 1985 CPH publication entitled* Justification: The Chief Article of Christian Doctrine as Expounded in *Loci Theologici. Key words such as* faith *and* grace *are conveyed to us through the centuries by means of these translations/publications—as well as "exclusive expressions" and the term* sola. *The following paragraphs come from the treatment of "Grace" found on page 136 of the 1985 work.*

Here again we must deal with a linguistic explanation, for it is very important in our teaching of the heavenly doctrine. The Holy Spirit, with singular wisdom, did not wish in the article of justification to use terms taken from the common usage of people, but many terms are of such a nature that they are neither used nor known with this meaning in other kinds

of speech, but are idiomatic, proper, and peculiar to Holy Scripture. Just as the content in this article is not known to human reason, so also the words are peculiar: in fact, I might call them sacred, not secular or commonly used.

I believe this is the case for two reasons: 1) That the very words might instruct us that there is a difference between the doctrine of the church and the opinions of philosophers, based on reason, regarding justification. Nor should we be surprised that our human reason recoils at the heavenly doctrine of the righteousness before God, since the very words show that there is a mystery here, something placed far above and beyond the purview of human reason. 2) The Holy Spirit wanted not only the contents of this article but also the terms themselves to have a special meaning, distinct from philosophical language, so that no similarity or relationship between the terminology would give occasion for confusion or intermingling of the ideas themselves, that is, that the very names of things might serve as warnings that the ideas of philosophy must not be mixed in with the article of justification and that we must seek no conformity or reconciliation between these two kinds of teaching.

The true light of this article was lost when the vocabulary began to lean toward the philosophical meaning of the terms. And the purity of the doctrine was restored in this way, that the words were once more recalled to the source, the word of God, and separated front the philosophical usage. I am mentioning these things in order that no one will despise this linguistic care, for it is so necessary that without it the sound teaching on this locus cannot be preserved. The adversaries at the present time are doing especially this, that when they do not dare openly to corrupt a word, they little by little turn it to another meaning. Thus the "Formula of the Interim" insidiously plays with the word *grace.*

Preachers, Poets, and Prophets

A portion from the writings of Bo Giertz as found on pages 414–415 of Minister's Prayer Book, (*Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986*).

Just as it was in the first century, so it is today: faith comes through preaching. But this preaching must then be done in the power of the word of Christ. A man may be ever so brilliant and eloquent, moving and wise, but it does not become preaching until he himself is taken captive by God's word and has no other desire except to let the word itself speak.

Therefore the first duty of the pastor is to preach the message of the Bible as purely and clearly as he possibly can, without any abridgments and without any reservations. He is a steward of God to whom has been committed the mysterious power over life and death. What God expects of his steward is that he be found faithful.

The pastor is, therefore, not a prophet. He is not constantly waiting for a revelation and a message from the Lord which will be spoken to his heart. If he does not know what he should speak, he should not restlessly wait for the moment of inspiration. He should sit down and read his Bible, look up the parallel passages, make excerpts, and gather material.

He should read the old preachers who knew their Bible and see what they said on this text and what biblical truths they set forth in connection with it. The pastor is not a prophet. He is a teacher ordained to proclaim the old message "as he has received it."

Nor is the pastor a poet. He does not wait for an inspiration. He does not set himself up to say something that nobody has ever heard before or that has never been uttered before in this world. He does not prepare his sermons in some beautiful spot by the seashore or in a garden bower. He is the servant of the word. His workshop is his study, where he works with his concordance, his Greek New Testament, and all the other helps he has in his library.

Least of all is the pastor a purveyor of talk and chit-chat. He is not there to tell little anecdotes picked up in the trolley cars or from the lips of children, or to deliver clever commentaries on the news of the day. His most zealous endeavor is not to make people come to hear him, but to have something to say to them, not to be original, but to be truthful, not to interest, but to help. This is not to say that a pastor who desires to be a genuine preacher of the word, has nothing to learn from the prophets and also the poets.

Why Not Christ the King Sunday?

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's *Lutheran Book of Worship* and The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's *Christian Worship* both designate the final Sunday of the church year as Christ the King Sunday. The framers of *Lutheran Worship* bucked the trend when they opted for "Sunday of the Fulfillment" or simply the "Last Sunday in the Church Year," rejecting the nomenclature that the LBW had borrowed from Rome. Where did Christ the King Sunday come from? Are there good reasons that the LCMS should not follow the lead of the ELCA and WELS in embracing this novel festival?

Unlike other festivals in the Christian calendar, Christ the King Sunday is but a youngster. Instituted on December 11, 1925 by Pope Pius XI, the Feast of Christ the King was to be observed on the last Sunday in October. Once upon a time (before the Reformation was stripped of its festival status, demoting it to an "Occasion"), the Festival of the Reformation was observed on this Sunday. It was not out of deference to Lutherans that Rome ultimately relocated Christ the King on the last Sunday of the Church Year.

There is a certain triumphalism evident in Pius XI's *Quas primas* as he develops the thought that the most effective way for Christendom to combat the rising humanism and secularism of the age is to assert the kingship of Christ. Pius argued that the recognition of Christ's kingship will "signal benefits of true liberty, of calm order, of harmony and of peace" (Adolf Adam, *The Liturgical Year: Its History and Meaning after the Reform of the Liturgy,* [Pueblo Publishing Company, 1979], 177). To obtain these blessings, Pius contends, "it is necessary that the royal dignity of our Lord be recognized and accepted as widely as possible. To this end it seems to us that nothing would help so effectively as a special feast dedicated to Christ our King" (Adam, 177).Liturgical scholars from his own communion were critical of the papal innovation. W. Duerig complained that the newly created feast obscured the liturgical-theological content of Epiphany (Adam, 147). Nevertheless, the feast became popular in the Roman Church.

Lutheran liturgical scholarship of the 1960's and 70's drunk deeply from the wells of the Second Vatican Council. A genuine ecumenism was often replaced by an unhealthy "us too" attitude in relation to Rome. "Christ the King Sunday" entered into American Lutheranism by way of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship's *Contemporary Worship 6: The Church Year* (1973).

Since the time of the Reformation, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Mt 25:1–13) has been associated with the final Sunday in the church year. Nicolai's *Wachet Auf* derived from this pericope has left its imprint on Lutheran eschatology. The Lord who comes is both bridegroom and judge. Those who reject his nuptial invitation to feast in his marriage supper are left only

Inklings

Why lunch was late at the first meeting of the Synodical Conference

Then we are agreed that, as we have liberty in such matters (*Dissonantia pizza non dissolvit consonantiam fidei*) we shall order an extra-large pie—⅓ bratwurst and saurkraut, ⅓ lutefisk (which we affirm to be the piece of cod that passes all understanding), and, for the guys from the Coast, ⅓ artichoke, shrimp, and avocado.

with judgment. His judgment will be a triumph over sin, death and hell for those who cling to him by faith. This is quite different from the *Christus Rex* who stands as imperial ruler over culture. Our church would be better served by the Sunday of the Fulfillment with its clear focus on the gracious promises of God to bring to consummation His redeeming work rather than the sovereign majesty inherent with Christ the King.

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How Did It Ever Get Started? Notes on a Theological Fiction

The Rev. R. E. Wehrwein, (see the letter section in this issue) sends this discussion of self-excommunication *and* self-exclusion.

> Our usurers, gluttons, drunkards, whoremongers, blasphemers, and scoffers shouldn't be excommunicated by us. They excommunicate themselves. They despise the word of God, enter no church, hear no sermon, receive no sacrament. If they don't want to be Christians, let them be heathen, and forever! Who cares about this anyhow? If they take the goods of ministers and appropriate everything for themselves, the minister shouldn't absolve them or administer the sacrament to them. They shouldn't be allowed to attend any baptism, any honorable wedding, or any funeral. They should behave among us as heathen, which they'll be glad to do! When they are dying, no minister or chaplain should visit them, and when they have died the hangman should drag them outside the town to the carrion pit, and no student or chaplain should escort them. If they want to be heathen we'll treat them as heathen (AE 54, 422–423, *Table Talk*).

This and another passage from Luther quoted by C. F. W. Walther on a page of his *Pastoral Theology* (347, 4th edition, 1890) are quite a disaster, a number of erroneous ideas being set forth (followed later by Fritz and others):

a. Someone who refuses to honor a congregation's summons to appear before it for the final admonition cannot be excommunicated.
b. First John 2:19 is used to support the concept of self-exclusion. (Earlier, on page 338, it is even used to support the concept of self-excommunication.)
c. Even the concept of self-excommunication is defended.

Not all of this is reflected in John Drickamer's abridged translation (250), but there may still be benefit in quoting it:

> If the one summoned states that he will absolutely not appear, he is not to be excommunicated since the final admonition, which is necessary according to Matt. 18:17, cannot be carried out. He has also already excluded himself from the congregation. It should be stated publicly from the pulpit that he has excluded himself from the congregation and the brotherhood and is to be treated as one who is outside (1 Jn 2:19) [Walther cites Luther, *Tischreden,* XXII, 974 ff.; and *Erlangen,* LIV, pp. 317 ff.].

Note also the following on page 247:

> Therefore excommunication cannot be carried out in the cases of . . . people . . . who do not want to be brothers, who have left the congregation themselves and so have excommunicated themselves (1 Jn 2:19).

Much of the above is reflected in the section on self-exclusion in that stupendous work of reference and digest of early Missouri and Synodical Conference literature, Eckhardt's *Reallexikon* (1907). The last paragraph invites special attention:

> The expression, "He excommunicated himself," is only to be used where a mortal sin is involved . . . . Such a one [who has excommunicated himself] is just as much under excommunication as if the excommunication had been carried out by the congregation.

A state of excommunication is inferred, though excommunication is not pronounced. From the correct premise that you really had an excommunication, the conclusion should have been drawn that it was a *mistake* on their part to state that the congregation couldn't act if its summons were ignored. Instead, the figment of self-excommunication was employed.

Astonishingly, even Carl Manthey Zorn, though not using terminology about self excommunication, once wrote:

> But what if the offender fails to appear before the Church, what if he gives the Church no opportunity to deal with him, declaring that he wants nothing more to do with the Church? In that case, indeed, he cannot really be excommunicated. In that case he has excluded himself from the church and the latter has nothing more to do with him. But the church shall, through its pastor, give public notice that he, being a manifest and impenitent sinner, has excluded himself from the church, and every Christian shall regard and treat him as a heathen and a publican and shall treat him precisely as if he were excommunicated. For seeing he even refused to hear what the congregation had to say to him, the word of the Lord surely applies to him: "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (*Questions on Christian Topics,* 225).

This last statement, of course, is correct. And what properly follows from that is well stated in Schuetze-Habeck,

> If the sinner has refused to heed the summons to appear before the church to hear its testimony, this refusal is the evidence of his impenitence which becomes the basis for excommunication (*The Shepherd Under Christ*, 177).

Why didn't Zorn realize how strange it was that an excommunication had taken place even though no excommunication had taken place?!

Baffling to this writer is use of "self-excommunication" to refer to falling from faith. See, for example, the short item on self-excommunication by Prof. F. Pieper on p. 312 of the April, 1930 (vol. 1, no. 4) issue of the *Concordia Theological Monthly.* Already then the definition with which we have all grown up was enshrined in the 1927 *Concordia Cyclopedia:*

> Excommunication is the judicial exclusion of unrepentant sinners from the rights and privileges of the communion of saints. According to Christ's words in Matt. 18, this act of exclusion is a duty to be performed by the Christian congregation when the offender has shown himself unresponsive to admonition.

With truly laudable clarity, Prof. John Schaller of the Wisconsin Synod wrote in his 1913 *Pastoral Theology* (107):

> Among us it is not uncommon to make a distinction between the real excommunication and the declaration that the individual concerned has excluded himself from the congregation ('self-exclusion').

In other words, it is stated that the sinner has refused to answer to the congregation for his sin—perhaps by not having come to the meeting. The distinction is inexact since actually only such a one can be excommunicated who has excluded himself from the Christian congregation through continued impenitence. Moreover, the distinction is also unnecessary since at bottom this judgment is the same as excommunication: a declaration that he is impenitent (Mt 18:17). Even more unfortunately chosen is the expression *self-excommunication,* a *contradictio inadjecto* since excommunication in its very nature can only be pronounced by another person. "This is the death-blow also for self-exclusion."

It is noteworthy that even Missouri Synod literature now says about this: "Is it proper to speak of *self-excommunication*? . . . Strictly speaking, only the congregation can excommunicate an unrepentant sinner" (1985 CTCR booklet on church discipline, 22). "LCMS theologians traditionally have regarded this term [self-exclusion] as more 'proper' and accurate than the term *self-excommunication*" (710–96 letter from LCMS office). The WELS (Schuetze-Habeek) pastoral theology says: "The term *self-excommunication* is inaccurate" (177).

Could the fact that Schaller was correct on this issue (in contrast to many in Missouri) possibly lead adherents of the Missouri position on Church and Ministry to re-examine their stand on that issue?

At bottom, the question is whether the congregation still has responsibility in the case of evasion—but not outright withdrawal—envisioned by Walther. How can anyone answer other than in the affirmative? Clearly, the congregation must still act.

The danger of operating even with "self-exclusion" is illustrated by this in a *Christian News* report (Feb. 2, 1998, 24) about developments in an LCMS congregation in the St. Louis area: "The three dissident families claimed they were excommunicated. . . . They were not! Trinity simply recognized their self-exclusion (as provided by our constitution)."

Could the following explain what Luther said: "A congregation may still be a Christian congregation, where excommunication does not exist. This was true in Luther's day" (*Pastoral Theology*, Prof. Arthur E. Graf, 13).

> It was Luther's full intention that the congregations should themselves through representatives assume responsibility for, and participate in, church discipline. But their moral and spiritual condition made such an arrangement unfeasible and it is hardly mentioned in the Lutheran church constitutions of the Reformation period ("Church Discipline" in *Encyclopedia of Lutheranism).*

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