LOGIA

A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

COLLOQVIA
Oder

Tischreden Do-
ctor Martini Lutheri / so er in vilen
Jaren / die Zeyt seines Lebens / gegen Gelehrten Leuthen /
Auch frömbden Gesten vnd seinen Tischgesellen gefüret. Darin von allen Artickeln vnser Religion /
Auch von hohen stücken / Fragen vnd Antwort / Item viel mercklichen Historijs / vnd sonst
von allerley Lehre / Trost / Rath / Weissagung / Warnung vnd verma-
nung / Bericht vnd vnterricht zu finden.

Anfencklichs von M. Anthonio Lauterbach zůsamen getragen / Hernacher in gewisse
Locos Communes verfasset / vñ auß viel anderer Gelehrter Leut Collectaneis gemehret

Durch Johannem Aurifabern.

Weiter ist auch hinzů kommen ein Newer Anhang etlicher Tischreden / So der Theure Mann Gottes / D.
Martin Luther gegen Gelarten Theologis vnd Pfarrherrn / kurtz vor seinem End vnd seligen Abscheid auß
dieser Welt / geführt hat / sampt vielen Trostschrifften / Sendbriefen / Auch Historien / Antworten auff vielfaltige
fragen / Bericht von den fürnembsten Heubtstücken Christlicher Religion / an gůther zeige Christe zum mehrer
theil geschrieben / vnd auch Mündlichen geredt. Jetzunder auffs Newe auß vielen geschriebenen Büchern zů-
sammen getragen / vnd allen Pfarrherrn / Studiosis / zů dienst vnd wolgefallen:

Durch einen liebhaber der Theologia an Tag geben.

Gedruckt zů Franckfurt am Mayn / im Jar M. D. LXVIII.

Potpourri

EPIPHANY 2009 VOLUME XVIII, NUMBER 1

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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 that 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 that we confess as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

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The cover art is from the 1568 edition of Luther's "Colloquia" or Table Talk (Tisch-Reden) compiled by John Aurifaber. A potpourri of the Reformer's conversations recorded at meals, Luther's conversations were recorded over the years by students and colleagues. Aurifaber recorded Luther's words during the last year of the Reformer's life. He also collected the notes of others and in 1566 put together a separate volume (separate from collected works of Luther's sermons, lectures, letters and other writings) of Luther's Table Talks.

Shown are Luther at the Table head (right), with Phillip Melanchthon to his left and others including Veit Dietrich and John Forster, both of whom also recorded Luther's conversations.

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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
LSB	*Lutheran Service Book*
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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The Harrowing of Hell

Filling in the Blanks

Peter Burfeind

Christ's descent into hell (*descensus ad infernum*) has inspired the imagination of theologians, the creativity of artists, and the comfort of laymen. The event is a veritable warehouse of doctrines through which the church has often rummaged. Yet, one cannot help but be puzzled by the usual parenthetical manner with which the doctrine is handled in most Lutheran circles.

Only a novel approach to the *descensus* can sever it from a discussion of the state of souls in the intermediate period between death and resurrection. After all, Christ's descent is precisely that: the intermediate period between death and resurrection. Unfortunately, speculation on this intermediate state is often met with knee-jerk anti-Romanism. Surely the Confessions—reflecting Luther's hands-off approach to the topic—unintentionally provoke this attitude, speaking of "useless, unnecessary" [Latin: *inutiles et curiosas*; German: *unnützlichen, unnotwendigen*] questions on the descent. But what is "useless and unnecessary" and what is not? What limits are established by the Epitome when it formulates the doctrine in its "simplest manner"? Has the modern church simplified the doctrine out of practical existence?

Or is it possible to wrestle with what amounts to the roots of purgatory and see if the church may short-circuit the doctrine at its early stages, claim for herself—and resurrect!—a beautiful doctrine purged of its antievangelical developments? An odyssey into the terrains mapped by these questions is the purview of this article.

DESCENSUS AD INFERNUM: TO SHEOL AND BACK

An inquiry into the intermediate period between death and resurrection may begin with a discussion of the *descensus ad infernum* in the Apostles' Creed. The phrase enters the stage of creedal history in the Fourth Formula of Sirmium, 359, which stated that the Lord had "died, and descended to the underworld, and regulated things there, Whom the gatekeepers of hell saw and shuddered."[1] J. N. D. Kelly notes that descent themes were prominent in Eastern liturgical material, and it was this Eastern tradition that likely influenced the formularies of the West.[2]

To the modern mind cultivated by Dante, hell means fire and eternal damnation. But the slippery nature of afterlife language throughout history makes translation of such words as *infernum* difficult. The Latin *infernum* invokes the typical modern understanding of hell, that is, as a place of eternal damnation. Yet, Luther praised Jerome for translating the Hebrew Sheol as *infernum* in an instance where it very clearly does not mean the place of eternal damnation (AE 18: 71), and he by no means understood Sheol as the place of the eternally condemned. He wrote in 1539 that the saints "enter into their chambers of rest, into Sheol, where they are gathered with their fathers" (AE 7: 293). And he wrote elsewhere, "Among the Hebrews Sheol very rarely means the place of punishments" (AE 16: 140). Even the word *hell* has roots in the original Norse *Niflheim*, ruled by the goddess Hel, a place more akin to the Sheol of the Hebrews than the hell of Dante. In the fourteenth century, an English preacher was able to say, "when Moyses hym-selfe died he vente to hell, and so dud all other men and wymmen."[3]

In short, Sheol is revealed in the Old Testament with more nuance than the wooden translation "hell" would indicate. Far from being the place of final, fiery, and eternal punishment traditionally assigned to hell, Sheol must be seen as a place flexible enough to embrace meanings such as *pit, grave, punishment, sorrow, guilt,* and even *depression*. In other words, it is the place where sin, death, and the power of the devil reign supreme.

Significant as a background to Christ's descent, all people—the faithful saints and the pagan—went to Sheol. Jacob repeatedly mentions Sheol as the destination for his "gray hair" (Gn 37:35; 42:38; 44:29–31).[4] Solomon speaks without qualification when he writes, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in [Sheol] where you are going" (Eccl 9:10). Job even identified Sheol as a place of repose from his sufferings (Job 14:13). Of course, the psalmist and prophets anticipate the curse of Sheol also for the wicked, even if in several contexts it is not so much punishments in Sheol which are anticipated, but death itself

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1. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (Essex: Longman House, 1972), 378.
2. Ibid., 379.
3. Edmund Reiss, "The Tradition of Moses in the Underworld and the York Plays of the Transfiguration and Harrowing," *Mediaevalia* 5 (1979): 143.
4. All Scripture quotes given are from the *NKJV*.

which will bring to naught the self-aggrandizing plans of the wicked (Ps 9:17; 55:15; Is 5:14; 14:9; and others). Yet, in the end the effects of the fall and its curse are upon all people.

The faithful of God awaited their redemption in a state of repose in Sheol.

The difference between the righteous and the wicked is not so much of place, as it is of hope. The righteous, while going to Sheol, hope for a restoration to life. The psalmist demonstrates this truth poignantly when he writes of this restoration as a "morning":

> This is the way of those who are foolish,
> And of their posterity who approve their sayings.
> Like sheep they are laid in [Sheol];
> Death shall feed on them;
> The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;
> And their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling.
> But God will redeem my soul from the power of [Sheol],
> For he shall receive me. (Ps 49:13–15)

The hope, then, of the faithful Hebrew was redemption from Sheol. In a verse much quoted by Luther, Hannah prays, "The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to [Sheol] and brings up." This sentiment is paradigmatic for the rest of the Old Testament, and brings up the hope of the resurrection. Rabbi Simai wrote, "There is not a single chapter of the Torah which does not contain the doctrine of the Resurrection."[5] In many places the Psalms invoke the Lord's redemption from Sheol as an ongoing hope, typified by the verse quoted in Peter's Pentecost sermon (Ps 16:10; 18:5–6; 30:3; 49:15, and others).

What sort of place was this Sheol and what was the state of souls there? Before a general survey of biblical data is given, a comment should be made on the Hebraic understanding of the person as an animated body, a "living clod of earth," in contrast to the Hellenic view of the person as an incarnate soul. The Hebrews' thoughts were terrestrial, appropriate for a people whose Lord said, "Dust thou art." The Lord had appropriated dust as the reception point of his life-giving Spirit, the point at which separate, individual, and unique creations would enjoy the gifts of life. Dust plus God's Spirit meant life; dust minus God's Spirit meant death (Gn 6:3). The Genesis account of creation and the fall thus informed the Hebrew understanding of the state of the dead.

George Foot Moore best summarizes the Hebraic understanding of the dead: "dead, limp shades, the semblance of their former selves bereft of all strength."[6] The miry existence of their bodies (Ps 40:2) paralleled that of their soul, and the Psalms often speak of the lack of remembrance in Sheol (Ps 6:5; cf. Eccl 9:5 and Is 38:18). The arrogant and proud lose their edge, presumably deprived of their knack for self-aggrandizement (Is 14:10).

Grounded in a terrestrial faith, the hope of the dead naturally resided in the Promised Land. As the special, unique, and elect location of the Lord's promises for restoration, it was the hope of every Hebrew to be buried in the "land of the fathers," namely, Abraham's Bosom, the bosom of the land of promise acting as a womb from which new birth would arise. Joseph's desire to be buried in the Promised Land comes to mind. Such terrestrial and literalistic hopes are demonstrated comically in Rabbi Simai's solution to the problem of Diaspora Jews buried outside of Palestine: "The Holy One, blessed be He, will burrow the earth before them, and their bodies will roll through the excavation like bottles, and when they arrive at the land of Israel, their souls will be reunited to them."[7]

Prior to any such burrowing, however, it was the generally accepted view that the faithful of God awaited their redemption in a state of repose in Sheol. Luther reflected the mainstream of ancient Judeo-Christian thought when he wrote:

> Jacob did not ascend into heaven; nor did he descend into hell. Where, then, did he go? God has a receptacle in which the saints and the elect rest without death, without pain and hell. But what it is named and what kind of place it is, no one knows (AE 8: 315 ff.).

He suggests elsewhere that this place is Christ's point of reference in the phrase "Abraham's Bosom." In this same context he quotes Wisdom 3:1, which refers to the safety of the Lord's saints "in His hand." He compares the righteous dead to a baby in the womb of his mother, alive, completely unaware of his existence, and awaiting birth unto the fullness of life. His language here calls to mind the imagery of 2 Esdras, where the revealing angel Uriel compares the "righteous in their chambers [in Hades]" to a woman in travail (2 Esd 4:42).

Rabbis such as Samuel bar Nehmani express teachings similar to that of Luther's:

> Do days die? But it means that at the death of the righteous, their days cease from the world, yet they themselves abide, as it says, "In whose hand is the soul of all the living" (Job 12:10). Can this mean that the living alone are in God's

5. Sifre Deut., Ha'azinu, 306, f. 132a fin.; quoted in *A Rabbinic Anthology*, ed. C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 607.

6. George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 2:289.

7. T.f.Ket. xii, 3, f. 35b, line 13; Ket. iiia; quoted in *A Rabbinic Anthology*, 600.

> hand, and not dead? No, it means that the righteous even after their death may be called living, whereas the wicked, both in life and death, may be called dead.[8]

However, at moments such as Saul's séance, the Lord may release a soul from his hand. And revealingly, Samuel complains that Saul has "disturbed" him, presumably from his rest.[9]

If the righteous existed in restful repose in the "hand of God" while yet in Sheol, in a place called "Abraham's Bosom," what of the unrighteous? Is there biblical validation for a geography of Sheol that accommodates various regions? At this point, Moses' reference to the "lowest Sheol," which Hebrew parallelism would place at the "foundations of the mountains," comes into play (Dt 32:22). Prompted by this verse later writers zealously worked various levels or regions into their geography of Sheol. Apocalyptic writers recounted their tours of these levels by the revealing angel, and rabbis would debate over the nature of punishments in these regions.[10] Luther was content at least in 1515 to accept the notion of levels in Sheol, referring to the upper and lower hells, the upper being reserved for those who died prior to Christ's advent (AE 30: 175). In this he was influenced by Augustine, who himself is preceded by a host of church fathers.

Jesus himself presents the fates of the righteous and wicked (Lazarus and the rich man) as existing on the same plane, separated only by a large gulf. A proper translation of Jesus' words would read, "And in Hades, he [the rich man] lifted up his eyes, being in torments." Notably, *Hades* is a thought distinct from those *torments* which are in Hades, and the translation of the NIV — "In hell, where he was in torment" — must be understood as an anachronistic rendering of Christ's words. In other words, Jesus' language certainly accommodates a general place of the dead known as Hades or Sheol, which has within it at least two regions, one which might be identified with Gehenna, and one which might be identified with Abraham's Bosom.

To review the data thus far, the Old Testament reveals Sheol as the fate of all people, the curse of sin. Still, within this place the faithful of God are protected in his hand. These faithful are the elect of Israel, whose status as a type of the full redemption of all humanity parallels the status of the Promised Land as a type of the full redemption of the earth. Both the promised people and Promised Land await the fulfillment of this restoration, and do so in a sort of soul sleep. Those who willfully reject the Lord's promises through unbelief and wickedness experience the punishment of flames in Sheol, residing in the lowest regions of Sheol. They are reserved for an everlasting death and condemnation (cf. Is 34:8–10; Jer 49:33; 50:39; 51:26, Ez 27:36; 28:19; Ob 10, Dn 12:2; Rv 20:13–14).

The preceding background illuminates many New Testament passages, which all too often are given a forced meaning through a certain form of Protestant allegory or metaphor rather than in their plain language. Equipped with an honest reading of the Old Testament data, many of the New Testament passages can be grounded in a more literal and smoother reading of the text.

For example, Jesus says to John in Revelation, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades" (Rv 1:18). One can easily fit this in the context of the Old Testament. Several Old Testament passages had already introduced the image of gates barring Sheol (Job 17:16; cf. Is 38:10). These gates were a powerful force preventing any escape from its grips (Ps 49:15; 89:48; Hos 13:14). If Jesus has the keys to Hades, certainly this would imply that he has and will use these keys for the purpose of opening some door, specifically a door which holds prisoners. Matthew 16:19 ties together these themes. Jesus gives Peter the keys and says that the gates of Hades will not prevail against the church. The only way to make sense of the gates in this passage is to see them as gates barricading people that are meant to be liberated. In other words, Jesus leads the church out of the gates of Hades, and the gates cannot prevail against the church.[11]

This is obviously the exact meaning behind the vast repertoire of art, literature, and medieval drama depicting Christ's "Harrowing of Hell." Common themes in the "harrowing of hell" iconography included the victory flag of resurrection, the cross,

8. Tanh. B., Berakahb. fin.; quoted in *A Rabbinic Anthology*, 580–581.
9. To be sure, church fathers from Tertullian to the present have argued that the apparition was a "ventriloquistic spirit" or demon. Tertullian wrote, "God forbid, however, that we should suppose that the soul of any saint, much less of a prophet, can be dragged out of (its resting place in Hades) by a demon." Compare Hippolytus's commentary on Kings, which notes that the deceiving demon inferred Saul's fate the way a physician might predict the result of a disease. Hippolytus interprets the demon to be in error as to the day of Saul's death. Yet, the Scriptures assign the personhood of Samuel to the being ("Samuel said . . ."). While the witch confuses the being with God (using the Hebrew *elohim*, translated as *theous* in the LXX), upon the description of the being she is corrected by Saul. Saul recognizes the being as Samuel on account of his mantle. There is no suggestion in the context that the being is anything other than the bodiless person of Samuel. The burden of proof lies with those who would force an interpretation contrary to the obvious language of the text.
10. Among the many debates between the rabbis Shammai and Hillel was that concerning the state of souls in the afterlife. The stricter and more literalist Shammai (50 B.C.–30 A.D.) argued for a purgatorial Gehenna on the basis of Zec 13:9. Hillel (70 B.C.–10 A.D.) tipped the balance in favor of God's mercy, arguing from Ex 36:6 and Ps 116:6. Hillel also believed in the annihilation of condemned souls at the end of twelve months.
11. The only alternative readings of this passage would be to say that (1) the church will be bursting through the gates *into* hell (but why this odd occurrence?), (2) the gates of hell will become detached from hell and go forth throughout the world attacking churches, or (3) *gates* is a metaphor for the power of the devil. In the latter two readings, one must ask the question: does this understanding of *gates* have biblical precedence? Is that the normal reading of the text? One would have to stretch an argument to answer in the positive. However, it certainly does not go against Scripture to assert that Jesus has the keys to Hades, gave them to Peter and the other apostles, and among their tasks was liberating people from the shackles of Sheol, Sheol being defined as the place where sin, death, and the power of the devil reign supreme (cf. Eph 2:2).

broken gates, the opening of the jaws of a great fish (the abyss), and Christ's grabbing the hands of Old Testament saints, usually Adam. The harrowing was also a popular theme of religious drama, forming an essential part of the *corpus Christi* mystery cycle.[12] In Lutheran circles, both Dürer and Cranach portray vivid depictions of Christ's assault on the gates of Hades. The Epitome references a sermon of Luther's at Torgau in 1533 that depicts the traditional view of Christ's descent. He preached:

> It is customary to represent Christ in paintings on walls, as He descends, appears before hell, clad in a priestly robe and with a banner in His hand, with which He beats the devil and puts him to flight, takes hell by storm, and rescues those that are His. Thus it was also acted the night before Easter as a play for children . . . . It is appropriate and right that we view it literally, just as it is painted, that He descends with the banner, shattering and destroying the gates of hell; and we should put aside thoughts that are too deep and incomprehensible for us.[13]

What is demonstrated strikingly in art is rooted in the less picturesque language of 1 Peter 3:19, where it is written that Jesus by the Spirit preached to the prisoners in Sheol (see 1 Pt 4:6). A question which vexed the fathers may be posed here: Did Jesus preach the gospel or only the law?

John is now operative. John 5:25 testifies that "the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." Who are the dead? Given the background already cited about Sheol, it is easy to see that the dead are those who are imprisoned in Sheol, which is the domain of sin, death, and the power of the devil. Thus, at this point in John 5, a metaphorical meaning could be rendered, and Jesus is simply saying that those who are dead in their sins will hear the gospel and live. However, the meaning of Sheol as the grave, the domain of the physically dead, is clearly the meaning given in John 5:28: "For the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment." When is this hour? Matthew 27:52 offers one answer: "The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised." The hearing of the voice of Jesus occurred sometime between his death and resurrection. At this point, Christ led the Church Triumphant out of Hades. The gates could not prevail against her, for Jesus had the key to Hades and ensured the eternal effect of their power through his apostolic ministers.

Christ's "harrowing of hell" rests on the assumption that prior to his advent (or the advent of preaching, as will be seen), those who died were not immediately judged unto eternal damnation or heaven. Revelation 20:13 says as much when it refers to the first death and the second death. The first death refers to Hades, or Sheol. And markedly, all those in Hades and Sheol are made alive again to face the judgment. It is *from Hades* that some go to everlasting life and some go to everlasting death. Revelation 20:14 first introduces a clear reference to the place of eternal damnation, namely, the lake of fire. Revelation specifically refers to this lake of fire as "the second death." The first death is Hades or Sheol, where Christ descended, where the dead were reserved, where the Old Testament saints were reserved. The second death is a lake of fire.

It would be the case, then, that no Old Testament saint went to heaven, understood as the beatific communion in the presence of God. Jesus Christ says as much when he says in John 3:13, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man."[14] Luther's own words (above) on the fate of Jacob clearly support this conclusion.

Is it the case, then, that the final judgment occurs not at death, but at the end of time? Several implications seem to be to this effect. The Revelation verse cited above places the assignment of Hades and Death into the lake of fire at the end of time. And 2 Peter 3:7 speaks of a reservation of heaven and earth for fire. 2 Peter 2:4 also refers to demons being reserved for judgment, which parallels the binding of Satan until the end of time (cf. Rv 20:2).

A host of patristic teaching (marked by a literalism which is refreshing) was prompted by these same Scriptures. Agreed on the basic premise that Christ descended into Sheol for some act of liberation, there is yet disagreement among the fathers. Generally speaking, the views of the fathers may be divided up into three categories.

One view posited that Christ preached the gospel to all people in Sheol. This position was held by Clement, Cyril of Alexandria, Hillary of Poitiers, Ambrosiaster, and Ambrose.[15] Clement of Alexandria, for example, argued from the universal economy of Christ's redemptive act that his preaching in hell liberated not only the Hebrew saints, but all who would hear him. He wrote:

> What then? Did not the same dispensation obtain in Hades, so that even there, all the souls on hearing the proclamation, might either exhibit repentance, or confess that their punishment was just, because they believed not? And it were the exercise of no ordinary arbitrariness, for those

12. Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).
13. Cited by F. Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church,* [introduction to] *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921), 192–193.
14. Thus, the statement that the heavens received the chariot of Elijah must be understood in light of Jesus' statement, and not vice versa. Christ's statements always stand as overarching principles, to which all Old Testament passages must submit. One solution to the seeming contradiction is that "heavens" simply referred to the sky, as often it does in the Old Testament. Another solution is that Elijah and Moses, the characters of the Transfiguration, are the exception to the rule. Yet, it remains that Christ says, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who has descended from heaven."
15. Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 102–105.

> who had departed before the advent of the Lord (not having the gospel preached to them, and having afforded no ground from themselves in consequence of believing or not) to obtain either salvation or punishment. For it is not right that these should be condemned without trial, and that those alone who lived after the advent should have the advantage of the divine righteousness. But to all rational souls it was said from above, "whatever one of you had done in ignorance, without clearly knowing God, if, on becoming conscious, he repent, all his sins will be forgiven him." . . . If, then, He preached the gospel to those in the flesh that they might not be condemned unjustly, how is it conceivable that He did not for the same cause preach the gospel to those who had departed this life before His advent?"[16]

Clement further taught that the apostles upon their own deaths continued Christ's harrowing work, preaching in Hades to the Gentiles.[17]

A second view held that Christ preached only to the Old Testament saints. This view was held by Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hyppolytus, Chrysostom, and Augustine. Irenaeus, for example, wrote:

> It was for this reason, too, that the Lord descended into the regions beneath the earth, preaching His advent there also, and [declaring] the remission of sins received by those who believe in Him. Now all those believed in Him who had hope towards Him, that is, those who proclaimed His advent, and submitted to His dispensations, the righteous men, the prophets, and the patriarchs, to whom He remitted sins in the same way as He did to us, which sins we should not lay to their charge, if we would not despise the grace of God.[18]

Tertullian argued for the two levels in Sheol but held the opinion (based on Rv 6:9) that martyrs get immediate transference to heaven. All other people — Christians and heathen — go to Hades, with the believers rising to meet Christ at the second coming.[19] He refers to "Abraham's Bosom" as a place "not in heaven, . . . yet higher than hell."[20]

Augustine and Chrysostom manifestly rejected the notion that Christ offered salvation to any but the Old Testament saints in his descent. Chrysostom feared that any hope of a "second chance" for pagans would weaken the church's call to repentance in this life. Augustine wondered why Christ would have given pagans a "second chance" before his resurrection, but not afterwards. And he mocked the notion, apparently current in his time, that there was a remembrance of Christ's preaching for those latter pagans.[21]

A final position on Christ's preaching in Sheol placed his descent in the greater framework of the total restoration (*paracatastasis*) of the fallen world. Suggesting Neoplatonic influences current in Alexandria, Origen argued for the necessary return of all creation — including demons — to the perfect order. The fires of hell were purgatorial, not punitive. Gregory of Nyssa too argued from his platonizing views on God that the punishments in hell were medicinal, part of the total plan of predetermined restoration.

This extensive survey of the full range of patristic authors, from Lyons to Carthage to Alexandria, demonstrates that the earliest church generally embraced the depiction of the hereafter as revealed in the Old Testament. With virtual unanimity, the fathers held that Sheol or Hades was the resting place of those saints who died prior to Christ's advent. Christ's descent liberated at least those saints and perhaps more.

PURGATORY: A DOCTRINE IN NEED OF PURGING

Obviously the immediate reaction to the interpretation of the data thus far given is that it flirts dangerously close to the fires of purgatory. Can a Lutheran approach these teachings and not be singed? It is hoped not. Chemnitz dealt sufficiently with the issue, and a modern history of purgatory (such as Jacques Le Goff's *The Birth of Purgatory*) friendly to the Lutheran position need not be reviewed here. What this article will rather probe are those impulses which hijacked the Hebrew doctrine of Sheol and developed the doctrine of purgatory.

To accomplish this, it is necessary to appraise the Hellenistic forces which had changed the paradigms of Hebrew theology in the intertestamental period. Martin Chemnitz centered his critical examination of purgatory in this exact period and cited the influence of both Platonism and apocalyptic literature on that period.[22]

One would assume that the strong Jewish nationalism of the Maccabean period, with its high suspicion of things Hellenistic, would foil any attempt of Orpheus, Theseus, Herakles, or Plato to invade Sheol as they did Hades and come back with descriptions more suitable to their pagan views of the afterlife. Yet, in terms of literary tropes, this is precisely what happened; the freight loaded onto themes and motifs introduced in the Old Testament in many cases were derived from Hellenistic impulses.

On a pure literary level, the apocalyptic writers took a two-dimensional portrayal of Sheol from the Hebrew canon with its vague references to levels, gates, mountains, and rivers, and added an exaggerated depth to it. Contact with Hellenism in Egypt surely encouraged this development. Le Goff wrote of Egyptian views of the afterlife, "When it came to the topography

16. *Stromata*, Bk. 6, ch. 6, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson [hereafter cited as *ANF*] (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885–1896; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 2:491.
17. Ibid.
18. *Against Heresies*, Bk. 4, ch. 27, in *ANF*, 1:499.
19. *Treatise on the Soul*, ch. 55, in *ANF*, 3:231.
20. *Against Marcion*, Bk. 4, ch. 34, in *ANF*, 3:406.
21. Augustine, *Epistles*, 164: 4, 13.
22. Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971–1986), 3:231ff.

of Hell, the Egyptian imagination knew no limits: the dead were lodged in a bewildering variety of houses, chambers, niches, and various other places."[23] Particularly creative, the Egyptians out-Dante'ed Dante in their sketches of the afterlife depicting walls, gates, muddy marshes, lakes of fire, and tortures. However, too often scholars assume syncretism wherever mere cultural contact occurs. In many cases, history contrapuntally argues for a conservatism among isolated ethnic groups swallowed up in a majority culture. But waves of seismic cultural change cannot easily be dodged. A far more powerful invasion stormed the defenses of the intertestamental mind than a few literary snatches of ancient Egyptian musings. This was Hellenistic philosophy.

Hades is one's individual and personalized reform program.

A popular form of philosophy known as "Middle Platonism"—a hybrid between Platonism and various Eastern mystical traditions (Orphism and Zoroastrianism)—infiltrated the Jewish mind in the intertestamental period. After his death, Plato's philosophy had quickly dissolved into a quasi-religious way of life involving renunciation of the flesh, contemplation of the virtues, and mystical communion with the divinity. Plato's successors identified a kinship with the Eastern mystical traditions, and the syncretistic impulses of Hellenism fused the two together as a formidable mystical-philosophical force.[24]

There is a focus on individual ethical improvement in Platonism and its hybrid, which is a theological departure from the communal morality of the Torah. If the Torah begins with God's self-giving love and ends with love of neighbor, Platonism begins with one's own self, and through an internal, mystical path ends with a beatific vision of the divinity. Death for the Platonist is escape from individuation. The afterlife is where the soul is drawn back into the divinity through fiery purging of "earthbound" thinking. Hades is one's individual and personalized reform program. Punishment is doled out by the gods (*daimones*) in proportion to the sins (*Republic* 10:615a–b). When the purgation or punishment is complete, the soul enjoys a period of mystic union with the divinity, after which its lust for individuation kicks in and it returns to the material world in whatever new form allotted for him by the divinity.

This mystical program had a broad attraction across religious boundaries. Certainly Judaism was not immune to its draw. Mystical Platonism sabotaged Hebrew theology, imposing a new hermeneutic upon the Torah. The charter through which God embraced his people became a book for ethical self-improvement. Put another way, the communal, liturgical cradle of God's promise(s) became a self-help book. St. Paul attests to this evolution in Jewish theology. He notes, for example, the relapse of the Galatians into a bondage to "beggarly elements" and the observation of "days and months and seasons and years." Yet, it is exactly such pedantic observances which permeate the Book of Enoch,[25] a work of the highly mystical Essenes.

This transformation in Jewish thought radically altered their view of the afterlife, where the stamp of Hellenism left its mark. For example, there is a strong cosmic determinism in the apocalypses which parallels Platonism (and Stoicism). God, being good but deterministic, could not possibly be allowing the evil in the world, thus, the afterlife became necessary as an arena where the wrongs of history were righted. Theology of the afterlife became theodicy. Also, Plato's understanding of the deity as an absolute, transcendent, and unchanging Being hardened the merciful Lord of the Scriptures to pleas for mercy. Four Ezra, for instance, recounts Ezra's repeated attempts to ask for mercy on behalf of the people of Israel, only to be told finally to accept the paradox that, no, the Lord will not have mercy, but yes, the Lord is more loving of the Jews than anyone! If there was to be mercy (as other apocalypses would allow), it would only be through purgation, the changing of man for God, certainly not vice versa. Finally, a certain Manichaean battle between good and evil pervades the apocalypses, good being defined as those who pursue a rigid ascetical lifestyle loosely based on the Torah, and evil being defined as those who join the common mass of greedy and immoral opportunists.

To underscore, then, the subtle but profound role of Hellenistic philosophy on Jewish views of the afterlife: as is seen throughout history amidst a looming cultural imperialism, syncretism of ideas, philosophies, and religions paradoxically abet an internalization and individualization of religion. This process took place in Judaism when confronted with Hellenism. Coupled with the loss of Jewish self-sufficiency and self-determination (the loss of which is paradoxically the flip side of nationalism) and the rise of the Diaspora, this syncretism served to weaken Jewish cultural bonds and led to more individualized preoccupations. The seeming anachronism of the Lord's promise of land and blessings—as little Israel got swallowed up in a great sea of Hellenism—encouraged a universalism with monotheists of other more philosophical and mystical persuasions, an evolution of methodology justified by the similarity between the Torah and, say, the *Republic* or *Timaeus*, with a little help from allegory. Add an ascetic spirit, a moralizing ethic,

23. Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 19–20.
24. D. S. Russell, *Between the Testaments* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 20–25.
25. 1 Enoch 41:5: "And I saw the storerooms of the sun and the moon, from what place they come out and to which place they return, and their glorious return—how in their travel one festival is celebrated more than the other" (*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth [New York: Doubleday, 1983–1995], 1:32). The role of Platonism in the development of Jewish ethics and especially in the erosion in the doctrine of justification in Judaism and in the early church is certainly a topic for further study.

a martyrdom complex, and abandonment from society, and the resultant mix generated a mind fixated on eschatology, cosmic battle, and a rigid code of ethics.

The caution with which traditional rabbinical thought approached the mystically motivated apocalyptic writers is evidenced in the Tosefta tractate: "The books of Ben Sira and all books which were written from then onwards do not defile the hands."[26] It was the rabbinical belief that hands which handled the inspired scrolls in Jewish liturgical worship were defiled through contact; those which did not defile the hands, then, were not to be considered part of the accepted canon. Rabbi Akiba wrote that those who have "no share in the world to come" included "he that reads the outside books" [that is, in the Jewish liturgical, public reading].[27]

Why were such books rejected as noncanonical? First, it was the Jewish view that prophecy had ceased from Israel after Daniel; the succession of the line of prophets going back to Moses (Deuteronomy 18) had ceased with Daniel.[28] Second, though generally written in Hebrew or Aramaic, the rabbis were skeptical about the Hellenistic character of intertestamental literature. For example, Jason of Cyrene, the author from whose work 2 Maccabees was abridged, was trained in a Greek school of language and literature. As Moore wrote, "what Philo would have loved, the Pharisees would have hated."[29] Third, apocalyptic writers were fanning the flames of zealotry, fueling the destruction of the Temple; the rabbis were inclined toward more diplomatic relations with Rome. Fourth, Christians were using the apocalyptic literature.

This last reason is problematic and segues into the heart of the reason for the rise of purgatory: Christians were more inclined to receive apocalyptic traditions, which in turn were highly influenced by Hellenistic (and therefore, purgatorial) views of the afterworld. To be sure, a Christianity inspired by the pentecostal Spirit was less absolute in its declaration of the end of prophecy. On the contrary, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17 quoting Joel 2:28). This *animus* prepared the way for all sorts of flirtation with apocalyptic literature. Yet, even as there was an internal debate on the legitimacy of apocalypses in Jewish circles, so was there such a debate among the Christians.

Using the Joel prophecy as a foundation, Tertullian, writing on the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, states, "And thus, we . . . acknowledge and reverence, even as we do the prophecies, modern visions as equally promised to us."[30] (That the conservative and orthodox Tertullian could so easily become a Montanist argues strongly for a more pristine acceptance of post-Pentecost prophecy, against which a developing church would eventually reformulate its understanding of the Joel prophecy.) Origen used the Joel prophecy to champion his allegorical approach to Scripture; the prophecy is fulfilled when a believer is not captivated by the "corporal meaning" of Scripture.[31] His hermeneutic conflated well with fellow Alexandrian Clement, who identified the *Logos* of the Scripture with the *logos* of Platonism, and Justin, who argued the universal *spermatika logos* in all pursuits of truth.[32] In each of the preceding thought processes there can be seen a distinct justification for the incorporation of both apocrypha and philosophy on the basis of the Joel prophecy.

On the other side, Jerome took a decidedly anti-Apocrypha stance in the Vulgate, and there is seen a marked drop in apocalypses around the time of the fourth and fifth centuries. Augustine too took a more conservative position. Yet, the damage had been done. Martin Chemnitz referred to the "apocryphal fables"[33] which served as the basis for purgatory, and it is precisely the adoption of these works which generated the rise of purgatory. Of these apocalypses, scholars generally identify the *Apocalypse of Peter* as the "Q" of such other works as the Christian *Apocalypse of Ezra*, the *Vision of Paul*, and the *Passion of S. Perpetua*. This apocalypse was among the disputed books, but was included in the canon of the Muratorian fragment and the *Catalogus Claramontanus*, an Eastern canon. Both Clement and Methodius regarded it as inspired Scripture. Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* has the first documented evidence of doubt regarding this apocalypse, listing it among the spurious books.

The *Apocalypse of Peter* calls to mind the Platonic-Orphic tradition, and includes such wonderful Orphic images as the boiling cauldron of filth. W. K. C. Guthrie wrote of the influence of Platonic-Orphism on Christian eschatology: "It is in the realm of eschatology, and perhaps there alone, that we find Christian writers offering dogmas which have their ultimate origin in the Orphic books."[34] Orphism, like Platonism, was a highly individual and internalized program of mystical self-improvement. The flesh is a place of trial for the soul, and the afterlife is the place for one's personal reform program.

Despite Augustine's doubts about the apocalypses and their presentation of the afterlife, the purgatorial imagery of the apocalyptic works and Platonic-Orphic philosophy had already taken root in the popular mind. The seeds of this doctrine sprouted and grew into the perverse medieval doctrine it became. Augustine in fact reluctantly codified the existing traditions and became the springboard from which the medieval doctrine took off.[35]

Luther—obviously a critic of purgatory—was given over to great skepticism about any possible subtle handling of Sheol or

26. Tosefta tractate, Yadaim ii. 13.
27. Tosefta tractate, Sanhedrin x. i.
28. Josephus wrote, "Our history has been written since Artaxerxes very thoroughly, but it has not been considered of equal authority with the earlier records by our forefathers, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time" (*Against Apion*, I, 37–43).
29. Moore, *Judaism*, 2:295.
30. Tertullian, *The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas*, in *ANF*, 3:594.
31. Origen, *De Principiis*, ch. 7, in *ANF*, 4 :285.
32. Clement, *Stromata*, ch. 13, in *ANF*, 2:504.
33. Chemnitz, *Examination*, 3:243.
34. W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion: A Study of the Orphic Movement* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), 269.
35. Le Goff, *Purgatory*, 61–85.

the afterlife. He wrote of the fathers' view on limbo: "Thus in former times horrible darkness was brought into the church because of such madness." He speaks of the "countless disputes and questions on the part of the ancients . . . sharp disputes [concerning regions in Sheol] and . . . various arguments that do not particularly impress me."[36] In this same context he wrote of the fathers in another place, "their laziness in matters of Scripture disgusts me" (AE 20: 96 ff.). But again, this language of Luther must be seen in its original context; he most certainly accepted the notion of Sheol as a place where all people go, a place where the wicked suffer but also where the righteous rest in the hand of God. He left many issues up for debate, as he wrote elsewhere:

> If anyone chooses to maintain that after Christ had died on the cross, He descended to the souls and preached to them there, I will not stand in the way. These words could give such a meaning (AE 30: 113).

He himself, however, took the position which has been handed on as canonical by subsequent Lutheran theologians.

UNIVERSALISM AND CHRIST'S HARROWING OF HELL: FILLING IN THE BLANKS

This article will now divert course, break with canonical tradition, and raise a question: Did Christ's harrowing of hell fill in the blanks implied by God's universal promise of salvation? To instigate thought, another simple question will be asked: Is it possible to speak of God's universal *promise* of salvation outside of the universal *proclamation* of salvation?

A brief review of modern universalism should quickly dismiss David Scaer's claim that the view which follows is "inherently universalistic, in that [it teaches] that people originally condemned or not having heard the Gospel are given a chance to repent."[37] By using the term *universalistic* without qualification, he invokes the negative *animus* which a good Lutheran will have against the generally accepted universalism of popular Christianity.

A survey of the history of modern universalism would alert any faithful Christian to the dangers of going down this path. The story begins with Charles Chauncy, a Congregationalist who denied the Trinity. Prompted by the lexical point that aiônos need not mean "forever," he argued that the fires of hell were by no means eternal, but purgatorial. John Murray (1741–1815), a Calvinist, continued the battle, arguing that the elect include all men. Christ had a "consanguinity" with all men, and so his death atoned for all men. Elhanan Winchester (1751–1797), an antislavery Baptist, held the "Restorationist" position, that a 50,000-year period of purgation would cleanse all men of their sins. Hosea Ballow, a Calvinist-Baptist, believed that finite sin cannot contain an infinite God; Christ's work was the deterministic actuation of God's desire to lead all men out of the misery of sin.

Universalism continued as a popular liberal movement. The typical Universalist was a Jeffersonian Democrat. In the twentieth century, the movement took a more humanistic course, and eventually united with the Unitarians. Universalism died down after other mainline denominations basically accepted its premises.[38]

The essential difference between the argument for universalism which follows and the survey just given is spelled out clearly by this teaching of Hosea Ballow:

> The divine grace of reconciliation may be communicated to those *who have never been privileged with the volume of divine revelation*, and *who have never heard the name of a Mediator proclaimed*, as the only way of life and salvation.[39]

That is, this article makes a vastly important distinction between the universal *salvation* of all men and the universal *proclamation* of the gospel to all men. The impetus for positing universal salvation is ultimately fueled by the tension between Calvinistic determinism and the love of God. "If only the elect are saved in accordance with God's determined purpose, but God is love, why can't it simply be said that all are elect" is the resolution to this tension for the modern Universalist.

An argument for universal *proclamation*, however, is compelled by no philosophical tensions, but by the very Lutheran and biblical teaching that "God . . . is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe" (1 Tim 4:10). The faithful Lutheran can rest assured that God will still put people in hell, for universal proclamation in actuality has little to do with universal salvation.

The universal *proclamation* of the gospel begins with the universal promise of the gospel. The church confesses "one, holy, *catholic*, and apostolic church." *Catholic* means universal; it is the antidote to the universal corruption of humanity (Rom 5:18). God's election of Israel was indeed for the purpose of making his name known among *all peoples* (Dt 7:7, 14; 10:15; 28:10; 1 Kgs 8:43; 2 Chr 6:33). David's psalm in 1 Chronicles 16 summarizes the theology of God's election of Israel, in which he prays: "Tremble before Him, all the earth" (1 Chr 16:30). And Isaiah prophesies about the latter days when "all nations" shall flow to the Lord's holy mountain (Is 2:1), where the Lord will prepare a banquet, swallow up death, and remove the veil spread over "all nations" (Is 25:6, 7). Again, Daniel prophecies about the messianic reign in which "all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him."

The advent of the Christ corresponds to this universal message, as the angel proclaims, "I bring you good tidings of great

36. cf. AE 7: 293ff.
37. David P. Scaer, *Christology*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics 6 (Fort Wayne: International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1989), 84.
38. Adian Hastings, Alistair Mason, and Hugh Pyper, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 733.
39. Ernest Cassara, *Universalism in America: A Documentary History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 42; italics added.

joy which will be to all people." And as Simeon speaks, "For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples." And the prologue of St. John reads, "That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world." And Jesus says, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to myself." And for this reason, the focus of the message of salvation is to "all nations."

That all ears will hear the gospel is in fact indicated in Philippians 2, where every knee, including those in the underworld, will bow before Christ and proclaim him Lord (Phil 2:11; cf. Rv 5:13). The question for this article is whether this knowledge and confession of Christ's lordship will have been given too late for those in the underworld. As if to answer this question, St. Paul writes in Colossians — using the aorist — that the gospel they have heard was *preached* "to every creature under heaven." He of course is speaking eschatologically here, and it is the depths of this eschatological preaching that is here explored.

Too often, a sort of Nestorian view of God's revelation drives an understanding of God's universal decrees. That is, it may be confessed that indeed God has made such universal decrees as demonstrated above, but then it is maintained that this universal decree cannot be understood as an incarnate reality. God may be thinking it, and telling a few people about it, but the reality is far different from what is going on in the lofty, transcendent, sovereign mind of God.

Yet Amos 3:7 reads, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless he reveals his secret to his servants the prophets." Of course, revelation understood christologically presents the Incarnate One as the prophet (Acts 3:22; 7:37), and more to the point, the very mind, face, hands, and Word of God in the world (cf. Jn 1:18; 5:37–39; 12:49–50). In other words, by implication, the Lord's universalistic declarations are manifested in the preaching of Christ (the genitive understood subjectively and objectively here); hence, St. Paul can indeed say that "every creature under heaven" heard the gospel. Obviously, St. Paul was not so confident in his missionary prowess that he believed the gospel at his time to have entered the ear of every creature under heaven. He is speaking eschatologically, or economically, a manner of speaking which fits well in the economic theology presented in his letter to the Colossians (and Ephesians).

The challenging of this "Nestorian" view of revelation calls for the defense an analysis of Acts 17:30. In his proclamation to the Athenian philosophers, St. Paul references the distinction between the former and latter times as one split precisely at the point of his own preaching: "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." Here is seen a clear universal decree on the part of God that all men repent. The "Nestorian" approach would be to say that at some point after the fulfillment of Christ's mission, perhaps at Pentecost, God made a decree in the heavens that all men are to repent. This decree is binding as of 24 May, 9:00 A.M., 29 A.D., upon all of humanity, Aztec and Inca alike. If Aztec and Inca do not actually hear this decree, well, this is an occasion for a theodicy, a vindication of God's justice, explaining how, even though God promised the gospel for all people, yet many (indeed, the huge majority) do not hear.

But such a separation between God's decrees and the preaching of that decree is precisely the sort of Nestorianism which is here challenged. One can only maintain this position by establishing a separation of God's divine nature (and his gracious judgments and promises) from his incarnational presence through the preaching of Christ.

Rather, it is perhaps more in keeping with Lutheran theology and the scriptural witness to understand God's decrees as enacted in and through preaching. In other words, when St. Paul proclaimed that "God now commands all men everywhere to repent" he was in fact speaking eschatologically (or economically), unfolding (or administering) God's decree for *those men* at *that time* in *Athens*.

Indeed, to speak of the "Day of the Lord" not as a specific day, but as an unfolding of the single day of Christ's death, is evidenced throughout Scripture. The very giving out of the Holy Spirit stretches the Day of the Lord across the span of time. Christ says the Spirit is not given until his death (Jn 7:39). Yet the Old Testament is inspired by the Spirit (2 Pt 1:21), and he fell upon the judges. Obviously the Spirit alighted on Christ at his baptism. Is the promise of his coming fulfilled at the precise moment of Christ's death (Jn 19:30)? Or at the institution of holy absolution (Jn 20:22)? Or on Pentecost (Acts 2:4)? Or later (Acts 8:14–17; 19:1–6)? The only way to understand this dilemma is eschatologically, or economically, that is, as an installment plan, an unfolding or administration of the single day of Christ's death through preaching to each subsequent (and preceding) age.[40]

In Romans 1, St. Paul writes, "the wrath of God is *being revealed* against all ungodliness," even as the righteousness of God is "being revealed." And immediately upon speaking of this ongoing revelation of the wrath and righteousness of God, St. Paul turns to the administration of this plan specifically for his Roman audience, a move dramatically enhanced by the switch of pronouns from chapter one to chapter two (*they* to *you*). Both Acts 2:17 and Hebrews 1:2 refer specifically to the last days as contemporaneous with their age. Truly it is the case that everything associated with the "latter days," from the banquet on the Lord's holy mountain to the accounting of sins to the righteous judgment of the Lord, is an occurrence in the divine service on the Lord's Day, Sunday.

Thus, to return to Paul's engagement with the Athenian philosophers and his reference to former times, the distinction between "former times" and "latter times" is not time-specific, but fluid. And Christ himself — that is, his proclamation — is the exact point where the two times are split. Christ was the first to pave the way from former times to latter times through his death; however, the latter times were inaugurated later for the apostles, as it was for certain people on the Day of Pentecost, as it was for the Athenian philosophers, as it was for the subjects of St. Paul's letter to the Romans, as it is for people today. By implication, there are people yet today who remain in the former times. Indeed, everyone is born in the former times,

40. cf. AE 30: 114.

and if the point be pushed, the Christian steps into the church on the Lord's Day each weekend from the former times.

The latter times are easy for the Christian to understand. These are the times of the kingdom, of faith, of gospel, of sacraments, of salvation. But what of these former times prior to Christ's advent? In St. Paul's proclamation to the Athenian philosophers, he refers to the former times as "these times of ignorance" which "God overlooked." Such overlooking certainly implies an aspect in the economy of salvation which is perhaps mysterious, but should not be confounding. Such overlooking implies an act of grace on the part of God, that those who worshiped idols or false gods were not to be judged in accordance with their ignorance (Acts 14:16; Rom 3:25). Of course, at the exact point of St. Paul's proclamation, God's overlooking ended. The Lord's Day of reckoning was at hand, and the Athenian philosophers entered into the Last Days.

Now, what is to be done with this time of God's overlooking? When Homer, Hammurabi, or the Aztec peasant died in 700 B.C., what happened to them? Does God's overlooking imply that he simply excused their ignorance and let them into heaven?

Of course not. Rather, when they died, they went to the place where everyone went, that is, Sheol. Sheol was the holding ground for people who died in the former times, until that time when Christ would descend into Hades, preach the gospel, and lead those who believed out of the gates of Hades and into heaven. And again, to push the point, Sheol is the holding ground for those living even today who die under the former dispensation of law and sin, whose lives are overwhelmed by the encroaching curse of sin, death, and the devil. The psalmist beautifully mouths the cry of all people when he says, "The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow" (Ps 116:3). But the psalmist is answered with the descent of Christ into Sheol and his preaching there, and so can confess: "I was brought low, and he saved me" (Ps 116:6b). Christ's preaching in Sheol thus serves as the economic source of all preaching, administered to all people throughout all time, be it Adam, Moses, Hammurabi, the Aztec peasant, the apostles, the Athenian philosopher, the modern Christian, the Jew up the street who knows nothing of Christ, the tribesman, or the unborn baby. What is not heard in this world will be heard in Sheol. St. Paul could speak with confidence that the entire creation *had* heard the gospel. And in response to the question "Have they not heard?" he answers in the positive: "Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world'" (Rom 10:18).

Thankfully removed by this argument are the twisted theodicies of those who, in effect, have to argue that old Abe the Jew who died the day after Jesus' resurrection without faith in Christ, but who awaited the Messiah, would go straight to hell. Gone are the drifting thoughts of what God may or may not do in his mercy outside of Christ, to which even Luther was prone in *Table Talk* discussions on the fate of Zwingli and the Anabaptists (AE 54: 152). Ended is the "bait-and-switch" sort of Lutheran theology that speaks abstractly of Christ's death for all men, but then slips into Calvinism when forced to explain why all do not hear; indeed, the bait-and-switch sort of theology becomes cynically typified in Christ's descent: Christ shows what will not be given. Speaking of Calvinism, wonderfully stamped out is the sort of theodicy that begins not with the Lord's mercy, and which explains his sovereignty from that perspective (as this article does), but which begins with the Lord's sovereignty, and explains his mercy in light of that sovereignty. And finally silenced forever is the pious message of gospel urgency, which in effect imposes upon all Christians the burden that they personally are responsible if a neighbor or coworker (or distant tribesman through their giving!) does not hear the gospel and consequently goes to hell. No, Christ has seen to the full proclamation of the gospel, for he "who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers . . . "

CONCLUSION

The universalistic urge was strong in the first centuries of Christendom. The mocking polemic of pagans Celsus, Porphyry, and Galen emphasized the novelty of the Christian faith. How could a small faction, recently spawned, have any universal claim to the truth? Against these attacks, the apologists employed the *Logos* and *spermatikos logos* theology mentioned above, and proposed the idea of "the righteous pagan." The ancient pagan was inspired by the *Logos*, or Reason, and those who lived righteously according to the law or *Logos* in their hearts were saved. This was the position of Justin. Origen's infamous position on universalism speculated that Christ paved the way for the restoration of the entire creation, including demons. All people would be restored, even if through purgation. One can see Platonic determinism at work in his system. His system had interesting heirs in the *misericordes* mentioned above. Gregory of Nyssa represented a universalism of the Neoplatonic variety. Using arguments echoed by Hosea Ballow, Gregory posited that the subjection of all things to Christ (1 Cor 15:28) necessitated the subduing of finite evil to infinite goodness. God's punishments, therefore, at best can be described not as eternal, but as medicinal.

One can see in ancient universalism the strong taint — again — of Platonism, the sort of which was avoided by others who subtly argued almost verbatim what this article also argues. Indeed, the reentry of the Christian Church into a pre-Constantinian-like era, with both paganism and syncretism prevalent, calls the church to find kinship with the church of that era and wrestle with similar issues. Roman Catholicism is the result of a syncretism between Hellenism and Christianity (especially with purgatory), but the church need not follow her path. Simply offered in this article is a modest proposal that it is indeed possible to restore the views of Irenaeus, Tertullian, the rabbis, and many others on Sheol (including Luther) without dabbling in the Platonizing forces which gave birth to purgatory. LOGIA

Missional?

The Church in Luther's Large Catechism

Ken Schurb

What do you mean by that? Nowadays, I find that I am frequently asking churchmen to define their terms, especially adjectives that end in the suffix *-al*. On more than one occasion, for example, I have questioned conference speakers in an attempt to discover what they meant by the terms *incarnational* and *sacramental*. I have received interesting responses. One speaker conceded that he did not have a good simple explanation to offer for these words. "I will have to work on that," he later told me privately. Even though another speaker had used these terms without definition throughout his presentation, he started his response to my query by actually acknowledging that the words are understood differently by various people.

More recently a new *-al* word has come down the pike which fairly cries out for clarification: *missional*. At least, I have been trying to do my share of outcry. In one group I frequent, some are amused that I will be pressing for a definition, or lamenting the lack of one, just about whenever this term arises. By sheer volume, the adjective *missional* rivals *incarnational* and *sacramental* in instances of occurrence within church literature these days. For this reason alone, it is worthy of scrutiny.

MISSIONAL?

A book that helped to put the word *missional* on the map bore the term in its title: *Missional Church*.[1] This book resulted from work by a team of scholars: two from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), one from the Christian Reformed Church, a Baptist, a Mennonite, and a Methodist.[2] No Lutherans were on this team, so its findings might predictably lack Lutheran insight. However, the circumstances these scholars addressed are common to almost all North American churches. Although world Christianity is expanding, churches on this continent struggle as religiosity becomes not only increasingly pluralistic, but also more and more individualistic and private. A post-Constantinian, "post-Christendom" world calls for some new thinking, says *Missional Church*. By the way, I concur with the book's analysis in these and other respects.

I also agree with the book's thesis that "the answer to the crisis . . . will not be found at the level of method and problem solving." So what *is* the real problem, and how can it be addressed? As far as the *Missional Church* is concerned, the real problem "has to do with who we are and what we are for. The real issues in the current crisis of the Christian church are spiritual and theological."[3] It should be noted that the "missional" approach is intended to be thoroughly theological, theological down to its roots. What grows from these deep roots will animate any "missional" practices that eventually come into view. The *Missional Church* gives fair warning that its practical recommendations emerge from its theology, which it insists is different from that of others.

As much as I share some of the basic concerns expressed in this book and other writings like it, and even though I applaud much of the analysis it offers, I submit that theological elucidation becomes essential. Thus the present article poses the question whether Lutheran roots differ from "missional" ones. In an attempt to become "missional," then, might we uproot ourselves from being Lutheran?[4]

The point I have in mind appears early on in the *Missional Church*. It is the claim that "the church of Jesus Christ is not the purpose or goal of the gospel, *but rather* its instrument and witness."[5] This claim does not present readers with a "both/and" conjunction. Instead, it sets forth an "either/or" disjunction. The church is defined strictly as a means to an end: "We have accepted the definition of the church as God's instrument for God's mission."[6] At best, these two statements say nothing to define or characterize the church as receiving the forgiveness of sins via the gospel or as having been called and gathered by the Holy Spirit through the gospel. At worst, the first claim constitutes a denial of such truths.

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1. Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).
2. In the year when the book was published, the Christian Reformed team member, Craig Van Gelder, moved from teaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, to join the faculty of Luther Seminary, St. Paul.
3. Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 3.
4. In 2005 Augsburg Fortress published a work written via a similar team approach that included the above-mentioned Dr. Van Gelder as participant and coeditor: Richard H. Bliese and Craig Van Gelder, eds., *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005). This book appears to form the culmination of an attempt to do something like *Missional Church* thinking and application in a Lutheran vein. By no means do I rate the project as entirely successful in such an attempt. Yet this book does make a contribution, as its subtitle promises.
5. Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 5 (emphasis added).
6. Ibid., 8.

"MISSIONAL" CHURCH AND THE CHURCH'S MISSION

Informally it is said that in a missional church everything revolves around mission. This may be a sort of street characterization of the missional ideal, but it coheres well with the statements quoted in the paragraph above. A missional church recognizes itself to be in the "salvation business," so to speak, and in it everything revolves around bringing the gospel to the unchurched.

Think about that. Everything? On the premise that *everything* in the church is to revolve around reaching unchurched people, why would I as a pastor rush to the bedside of a dying church member? Why should I, unless I have reason to think an unchurched person might also be there? Maybe I should then speak the good news directly to the unchurched person, letting the church member dying in the bed be content to overhear what I say to his friend.

Christ gave his church the mission to "Go and make disciples of all people," doing so "by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and by teaching them to pay close attention to everything I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19–20). People are to be baptized only once, but teaching and preaching continue for the baptized within the church. To be sure, the church is always in the "salvation business." Yet its mission is not exclusively to deliver salvation to new people.[7] Therefore in Lutheran theology, which should inform Lutheran church practice, the ongoing proclamation of the gospel does not cease to be a matter of death and life for the baptized, that is, for the church.[8]

"Watch yourself and your teaching," Paul wrote Timothy. "Continue in these things. For if you do so, you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim 4:16). Through teaching God's saving word, Pastor Timothy would save people. He would save not only those who had first heard this word from him as recently as the previous day, but also those who had been faithfully listening to his proclamation over a period of years. For the Lord gives forgiveness, life, and salvation through his word both to the unchurched and the "churched."

THE CHURCH IN THE LARGE CATECHISM

Martin Luther's Large Catechism did not say that everything in the church revolves around bringing the gospel to the unchurched. True, the Large Catechism indicated that everything in the church revolves around something. But that "something" is the forgiveness of sins, also for those who are already in the church. Everything preached should be directed toward it, Luther maintained.

> Forgiveness is constantly needed, for although God's grace has been acquired by Christ, and holiness has been wrought by the Holy Spirit through God's Word in the unity of the Christian church, yet we are never without sin because we carry our flesh around our neck (LC II, 54).[9]

Still referring to everything in the church, the Large Catechism continued:

> Therefore everything in this Christian community is so ordered that everyone may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and signs appointed to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live on earth. Although we have sin, the Holy Spirit sees to it that it does not harm us because we are a part of this Christian community. . . . God forgives us. (LC II, 55)[10]

In this Christian church, forgiveness of sins is given by God through the gospel of Christ. Luther wrote: "Outside this Christian community, however, where there is no gospel, there is also no forgiveness" (LC II, 56).[11]

To bring people the forgiveness with which the church is filled, then, one needs to bring them into the church! It is "in this Christian church," as the Small Catechism put it, that the Holy Spirit "daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers."[12] In the Large Catechism Luther went into greater detail, noting that the Holy Spirit "first leads us into his holy community, placing us in the church's lap, where he preaches to us and brings us to Christ" (LC II, 37).[13] For

> in this Christian community we have the forgiveness of sins, which takes place through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire gospel. This encompasses everything that is to be preached about the sacraments and, in short, the entire gospel and all the official responsibilities of the Christian community. (LC II, 54)

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7. The authors claim that Lutheran weakness in evangelizing is shown not only by "our inability to reach a growing non-churched culture" but especially by "our inability to pass on the faith to our children" (Bliese and Van Gelder, eds., *The Evangelizing Church*, 45). But isn't it part of the church's mission to nurture baptized children, church members, with God's word?
8. See Ken Schurb, "The Church: Hospital or Gymnasium?" *Logia* 1 (Reformation 1992): 17–22.
9. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of the Lutheran Confessions are from Kolb-Wengert.
10. Similarly, Luther wrote in his *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* of the previous year (1528): "In this Christian Church, wherever it exists, is to be found the forgiveness of sins, i.e., a kingdom of grace and of true pardon. For in it are found the gospel, baptism, and the sacrament of the altar, in which the forgiveness of sins is offered, obtained, and received. Moreover, Christ and his Spirit and God are there" (AE 37: 368; original in WA 26: 507).
11. *Missional Church* clearly has little use for "the affirmation that there is no salvation outside the church." When this affirmation is made, the book contends, the church "sees itself as the fortress and guardian of salvation, perhaps even its author and benefactor, rather than its grateful recipient and guest" (98). Quite a contrast with Luther and his Large Catechism!
12. *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1991), 15.
13. In his catechetical sermon on the Creed in December 1528, Luther said that the Holy Spirit "has led you into the holy, catholic church and placed you in the bosom of the church. But in that church he preserves you and through it he preaches and brings you [to Christ] through the Word" (AE 51: 166; WA 30, I: 91).

In fact, it is *through the church* that the Holy Spirit brings people into the church, because the church proclaims the gospel. Luther stated: "The Holy Spirit will remain with the holy community or Christian people until the Last Day. Through it he gathers us, using it to teach and preach the Word" (LC II, 53).[14]

Characterizing Luther's ecclesiology, Bernhard Lohse wrote, "God's redeeming and justifying activity occurs in and through the church."[15] The Large Catechism certainly said as much. In it the church figures in two ways, not just one. The church is both the fruit of Christ's mission and God's means for continuing his mission in the world.[16] First, God's justifying activity takes place in the church, as Lohse put it. Second, the church is also an instrument for mission, since God's justifying activity occurs through her bringing the word to people and urging it upon them.

In the Large Catechism, then, "Luther is most explicit on this point: that the church as community, as fellowship, is both the creation of the Spirit and His locus for activity."[17] The fact that Luther made this point in this particular document shows that he did not consider it a subject only for the attention of theologians. True, it is paradoxical to think of the church both as an end of sorts *and* as God's means to an end.[18] Nonetheless, Luther wanted laypeople to think in terms of this paradox. He did not consider these things beyond their grasp, and certainly not beyond the grasp of those who taught them the catechism. All Lutherans should still delight to keep the two complementary points of this paradox together, never separating them, not even in the name of being "missional."

THE CHURCH AS AN END

"Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, to make the church holy by using water together with the word to wash her clean. He did this so that he could present her to himself as a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; yes, he did this so that she might be holy and without fault" (Eph 5:25–27). In the Apology, Philipp Melanchthon wrote that the Augsburg Confession's article on the church reflected this biblical statement quite closely (Ap VII, 7). Of course, the Augustana had affirmed that the church is "the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments administered according to the gospel" (AC VII, 1, German). The corresponding Latin text called these believers "saints," for they are justified in Christ. Correct as it is to esteem the church as the instrument for God's mission, it must always be recognized that she receives before she gives. The church is the object of God's love and forgiveness in Christ through the Holy Spirit's work via word and sacrament.

Correct as it is to esteem the church as the instrument for God's mission, it must always be recognized that she receives before she gives.

The year before the Augsburg Confession, the Large Catechism already maintained that through the preaching of Christ the Holy Spirit creates, calls, and gathers the church (LC II, 45). From the standpoint of an individual Christian, Luther wrote:

> Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and copartner in all the blessings it possesses. I was brought into it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God's Word, which is the beginning point for entering it (LC II, 52).

This expression somewhat resembles Luther's Third Article explanation in the Small Catechism, which, Chuck Arand observes,

> describes the work of the Spirit in the believer and within the church in parallel statements (call, enlighten, sanctify, and keep). It links them together through the adverb *gleich wie* (even as). As the Spirit creates faith in individuals he simultaneously gathers them into the church and keeps them in Jesus Christ!"[19]

This work is ongoing. For the Holy Spirit "continues his work without ceasing until the Last Day." On a daily basis he "brings us into this community through the Word, and imparts, increases, and strengthens faith through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins" (LC II, 61, 62). The Large Catechism empha-

14. Kolb-Wengert's translation "teach and preach," understandable in this context, is still perhaps a bit too precise for the German *führen und treiben*. Perhaps it would have been better to say that the Holy Spirit uses the church to *bring* the Word to people and *urge* it upon them.
15. Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. and ed. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 281.
16. See Klaus Detlev Schulz, "The Missiological Significance of the Doctrine of Justification in the Lutheran Confessions" (Th.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1994), 130. See also p. 134: "One aspect of the church is that she is the community of saints which have been gathered through the mission of the triune God; whereas, the other dimension is her active participation in God's mission of bringing the saving Word to others." On p. 69 the matter is put still more simply, namely, the church is both "realization of the Kingdom and instrument of the Kingdom."
17. Robert D. Preus, "The Confessions and the Mission of the Church," *The Springfielder* 39 (1975): 21.
18. Schulz offers a mild corrective, quoting Hendrikus Berkhof: "The Gospel of God's universal grace through Christ's redemptive work is brought by the Holy Spirit's mission to all ends of the world through His church. In light of this universal aspect of the divine mission the Holy Spirit's movement 'has an end in the church—yet it is not an end in itself.' For the goal of the Spirit is always to reach out beyond the boundaries of the church to the ends of the earth so that the world becomes full of the knowledge of the Lord" (Schulz, "Missiological Significance," 68–69).
19. Charles P. Arand, *That I May be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 163.

sized that "the same word that creates faith within the individual also creates the church."[20]

Likewise, the gospel that creates and sustains the church is the word of forgiveness *for you*. Earlier in the Large Catechism, Luther had written, "The entire gospel that we preach depends on the proper understanding of this article" of the Creed, namely, the second (LC II, 33). He had encapsulated the meaning of this article in the short statement, "I believe that Jesus Christ, true Son of God, has become *my Lord*" (LC II, 27, emphasis added). Moreover, when treating the Lord's Supper later in the book Luther wrote that "the whole gospel and the article of the Creed, 'I believe in one holy Christian church . . . the forgiveness of sins' are embodied in this sacrament and offered to us through the Word" (LC V, 32). Again in the Lord's Supper the emphasis falls on Christ's gifts *for you*. "Ponder, then, and include yourself personally in the *you*," Luther urged (LC V, 65).[21]

Yet it is the gospel *for you* in the doctrine of the church — the church as receiver of God's gifts — that disappears with the "missional" claim, "the church of Jesus Christ is not the purpose or goal of the gospel, but rather its instrument and witness." This gospel is omitted from the picture when the church is defined simply as "God's instrument for God's mission."[22] Although such "missional" thinking may stress that the gospel is for everyone else, Lutherans cannot help but rejoice that it is *for you*.

As the Large Catechism illustrates, this Lutheran emphasis is hardly new, nor is it peripheral. Recently, it has been observed that

> trying to speak in the third person when explaining Luther's theology — persistently saying "one is baptized," for instance, rather than "I am baptized" — makes for unbearably awkward prose. This is no accident, of course. Luther wants to make it difficult to overlook the first-person character of faith, which includes the realization that Christ's life and death, preaching and promise are indeed *for me*. This is the famous Lutheran *pro me*.[23]

Preaching on Christmas Day of the year after he wrote the catechisms, Luther said the faith we must proclaim is "that anyone could say 'to *you* is born,' as the angel says." It remains a "high article" to believe that the Infant born of Mary is true God, but even more to be grasped are the angel's words *a Savior, Who is the Lord* and *to you*. "This is our theology," Luther flatly declared. It also becomes our comfort: "When I die I shall see nothing but black darkness, and yet that light, 'To you is born this day the Savior' [Lk 2:11], remains in my eyes and fills all heaven and earth."[24]

The "Lutheran *pro me*" does not constitute an outmoded piece of older theology or piety that can be discarded or updated to suit our current post-Constantinian, post-Christendom ecclesiastical situation. On the contrary, it bulks large for the church in any and all times and circumstances. As Luther noted for his Christmas 1530 hearers, it is the heart of the gospel.[25] Further, if I do not savor the sweetness of Christ and his love *for me*, I will face a more difficult challenge when I do turn to tell others about him and how his love is for them.[26] This assertion is relevant to the second point in the Large Catechism's paradox: the church as God's means to the end of mission.

THE CHURCH AS MEANS TO AN END

Although some might think it beneath the dignity of the church to refer to her as a "means," this is precisely what the Large Catechism did. In response to a question about how the Holy Spirit makes me holy, Luther answered that the Spirit's ways and means (*Mittel*) are "the Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting" (LC II, 41). Later he added that "the office and work of the Holy Spirit" is "to begin and daily increase holiness on earth through . . . the Christian church and the forgiveness of sins" (LC II, 59).

While affirming that the church is the bride of Christ, passively receiving his love and forgiveness, the Lutheran Confessions did not shrink from describing what she actively does in the world as God's means to his end. The Large Catechism indicated that this bride becomes "the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God." For by means of the church the Holy Spirit proclaims this word, "through which he illuminates and inflames hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it" (LC II, 42).[27] Of course, as Klaus Detlev Schulz of Fort Wayne observes, the church

> does not become "corredemptrix" in the strict sense. Her proclamation of the Word only reaches the ears; she cannot

20. Ibid.
21. See Ken Schurb, "The Church as a Baptizing Community," a paper written for the Outreach Department of the Missouri Synod Board for District and Congregational Services in 2001 and available from its office. This paper, which depends significantly upon the Large Catechism, points out that a baptizing community is first a *baptized* community.
22. Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 5, 8.
23. Philip Cary, "Why Luther is not Quite Protestant: The Logic of Faith in a Sacramental Promise," *Pro Ecclesia* 14 (2005): 452. See Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 68.
24. AE 51: 212, 213, 214. Not long thereafter, in his large Galatians commentary Luther would call "our theology" the distinction between active and passive righteousness (AE 26: 7). Receiving in faith the gospel that is *for you* is to have passive righteousness from God in Christ.
25. This evangelical emphasis is reflected in AC VII, where the church is defined as the assembly of those who believe. Edmund Schlink observes, "We must note at this place that the church in the Augsburg Confession is not defined as the assembly of believers in which good works are done!" (Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961], 201).
26. Schulz states: "In terms of mission the believer is therefore primarily and in the first instance a receiver, therefore passive in God's saving mission and only in the secondary sense carrier and active in His mission. The motivation for mission is not primarily rooted in the Great Commission (imperative) but in the indicative of God's act in Christ" (Schulz, "Missiological Significance," 111).
27. Similarly, Luther had declared in his December 1528 catechetical sermon on the Creed: "The Christian church is your mother, who gives birth to you and bears you through the Word. And this is done by the Holy Spirit who bears witness concerning Christ. . . . The Holy Spirit . . . sanctifies by leading you into the holy church and proclaiming to you the Word which the Christian church proclaims" (AE 51: 166; WA 30, I: 91–92).

> penetrate the heart to bring the saving faith. She therefore is in the full sense only *Mitwirkerin* of salvation but never *Miterlöserin* in God's salvation plan.[28]

The Large Catechism remained quite consistent on this point. It held that the Holy Spirit "has appointed a community on earth" to carry out his saving work, and it added that he "has not yet gathered together all of this Christian community, nor has he completed the granting of forgiveness." He continues to disseminate his gospel via the church, the community "through which He speaks and does all His work" (LC II, 61–62).[29]

Those last few words should be noted well. The Holy Spirit does all his saving work *through the church*. The Large Catechism did not say, "through pastors." It was not thereby denying the divine institution of the office of the ministry to preach the word and administer the sacraments. The catechism was implying, however, that pastors proclaiming God's word speak not only for the Lord but also for his church.[30] In this way, Luther in the Large Catechism was carrying through on something he had said earlier, that when a pastor preaches or carries out other official duties in place of the congregation, then the church does it, and when the church does it, God does it.[31] He was also anticipating what the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope would later say, that the keys have been given principally and immediately to the church (Tr 24).[32]

The Large Catechism did not omit the powerful one-on-one speaking of the gospel by Christians:

> Besides this public, daily, and necessary confession, there is also the secret confession that takes place privately before a single brother. . . . Thus by divine ordinance Christ himself has placed absolution in the mouths of his Christian community and commanded us to absolve one another from sins. So if there is a heart that feels its sins and desires comfort, it has here a sure refuge where it finds and hears God's Word because through a human being God looses and absolves from sin. (LC VI, 13, 14)

In short, there is every reason to affirm with Klaus Detlev Schulz that the missionary task is given to the entire church, to both the royal priesthood and those rightly called [*rite vocati*].[33] As Luther said in his 1528 catechetical sermons, "there is one, holy church . . . through which the Holy Spirit speaks and causes the preachers to preach the gospel" (AE 51: 168; WA 30, I: 94).

The church is God's means to the end of mission in this world.[34] Schulz observes that the objective of this evangelizing is not

> the transplantation of existing church structures nor an institutional or organizational expression of the church but the extension of the kingdom of God. This mission cannot be separated from the church; based on the fulness of the missionary power of the Word, mission rather is an inseparable component of the church's existence in this world. Mission occurs wherever the people of God are present and proclaim the Word."[35]

Here Lutheran theology, growing out of the biblical gospel as confessed in the Large Catechism, reaches conclusions which might be found to resemble "missional" thinking in some respects. The church is God's means to the end of mission, though not as an alternative to her receiving the Lord's forgiveness through the means of grace! Schulz notes that from the standpoint of an individual Christian who confesses the faith, "taken up through his justification as God's child, he cannot but become a sub-agent of the mission or he would fail to live up to his faith and miss his calling."[36] The gospel-centered power of God's word takes hold of his church and propels it forward in evangelizing. As Christ is the light of the world, his people become the light of the world by proclaiming him. Given this reality, Schulz states that

28. Schulz, "Missiological Significance," 67–68.
29. Not long after Luther wrote the catechism, he commented on Is. 66:11, noting both that "the breasts of the Holy Spirit are full" and that "through the Holy Spirit the breasts of the church comfort many hearts with peace and the security of faith. It is as if He were saying, 'You will see, I will put much glory upon them and will comfort them with the Word'" (AE 17: 408; WA 31, II: 578).
30. Marquart commented: "It is pointless to ask therefore: 'Is the church or the ministry doing this?'—as though two separate entities were acting. It is rather Christ's church which baptizes, confesses, teaches, consecrates, prays, serves, and does everything else, including the appointment of ministers—and in so far as she acts publicly and officially, she does all this with and through her (and Christ's!) public, official ministry, without any competition between them" (Kurt E. Marquart, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics 9 [Fort Wayne, IN: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990], 149).
31. WA 10, III: 216.
32. Compare C. F. W. Walther's seventh thesis on the ministry from his *Church and Ministry*: "The holy ministry [*Predigtamt*, preaching office] is the power, conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of the priesthood and of all church power, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office on the communality's behalf." This is the translation offered in Marquart, *The Church*, 119. A note says that "communality" is awkward, but this word is an attempt to indicate "a common and corporate possession" (119, n. 26).
33. Schulz, "Missiological Significance," 66.
34. Interestingly, those who emphasize a theocentric dimension to mission via the phrase and concept *missio Dei* have often had difficulty "incorporating and defining the human enterprise, namely the service of the church" (Ibid., 126 n. 19).
35. Ibid., 7.
36. Ibid., 175. See also Hartenstein, who writes: "The confessors of Christ have at all times been His messengers, witnesses, and missionaries. We can only confess Christ in giving testimony to the kings and beggars of this world and not be ashamed of Him. Mission is testimony. Mission is confession" (Karl Hartenstein, "The *Augsburg Confession* and its Missiological Significance," trans. and ed. Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 65 [2001]: 33).

    Similarly, but in corporate terms, Weinrich observes: "To reflect upon 'mission' or upon 'evangelism' is to reflect upon the Church itself, for the act of mission or of evangelism is not accidental or coincidental to the Church—like the activity of golf, tennis or horsebackriding is to this or that individual—but the act of mission belongs to the very 'core' of what it means to be the Church" (William C. Weinrich, "Evangelism in the Early Church," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 45 [1981]: 61).

> the ideal case should be that mission cannot be an activity of the Church among others; it is not an additional enterprise which need not concern too much the Church as a whole and be left to some specialists or little group of enthusiasts. The missionary dimension of the church pertains to the church as a whole, and it is not one department or Christian action among others.[37]

Finding theologically responsible ways to put this pervasive emphasis into practice looms large as a task for the church militant. An evangelizing church culture has to be cultivated for our day, a large part of which will consist in teaching church members to speak the Christian faith to others.[38] Getting folks off dead center will continue to be a challenge. The *Missional Church* calls "the dichotomy between the benefits of salvation and the mission for which we are saved . . . the continuing crisis of Western Christianity."[39] It has to be addressed.

But nothing will be solved by emphasizing the church as means to an end while minimizing the same church as the bride of Christ washed by her Lord in baptism, made clean via his word, and fed on his body and blood under bread and wine. Put differently, we need to avoid weakening or even compromising the radical nature of God's justifying grace in Christ in our desire to get people to do something, namely, telling the good news about Jesus.[40] When the question is asked, "Can Lutherans emphasize justification and evangelizing at the same time?" let us answer with a resounding *yes* to both.[41]

MEMBERSHIP IN A "MISSIONAL CHURCH"

Consonant with the catechism's insistence that everything in the church revolves around the forgiveness of sins, Lutheran theology (for example, AC VII) defines the church as a congregation of believers, not behavers. Not so, though, in the *Missional Church*![42] The authors of the *Missional Church* distinguish between "centered sets" and "bounded sets" as they analyze the church and give advice concerning its shape. The "centered set" is a broad-ranging group of people invited to move in the direction of God's reign. It is "open to all who may want to be on this journey."[43] This centered set includes a wide variety of people: some who are confused about the meaning of Christianity, others who might be described as religiously hungry, many who are still testing for themselves what they hear in church, and still others too. Other authors often call such people "seekers."

Within this "centered set" lies a smaller and more committed group. This is a "bounded set," described as a "covenant community . . . composed of those who have chosen to take on the commitment, practices, and disciplines that make them a distinct, missionary community."[44] The intent is to form a committed covenant community that will exist within a broader congregation of seekers and others.

Conceiving of the missional community in this way is regarded as good, because it addresses two burning issues, namely, (1) "the loss of ecclesial identity among those who attend churches" and (2) the need to place priority on "reaching the unchurched and activating the inactive."[45] The "centered set" addresses the first issue, and the "bounded set" addresses the second issue. This ecclesiastical model provides a way for churches simultaneously to decrease and raise their expectations of different people, while constantly encouraging folks in the "centered set" to move further and further in the direction of the "bounded set."

The most important observation to make about this "missional" model is that, whether "centered" or "bounded," both sets are defined as groups of *behavers*, not *believers*. This is most obviously the case with the "bounded set." It is "an order bound together through specific practices and disciplines." In fact this "bounded set," or covenant community, "has affinities to Wesley's band of disciples."[46] The *Missional Church*'s critique of "the self-conception of the church as a voluntary association of individuals" ends up disappointing the Lutheran reader when the alternative turns out to be "forms of covenant identity."[47]

The "centered set" differs from this covenanted "bounded set" in that the members of the "centered set" have not all agreed to the same forms of discipline and accountability Perhaps they have not consented to anything. "A centered-set community invites all to enter the journey at any point they choose. There is no demand to have arrived at a specific point along the way."[48] As "the presence of an unbounded centered community" is supposed to "profoundly affect the public character of worship," it should not be forgotten that those in this centered set include "the curious, the skeptical, the critical, the needy, [and] the exploring" in addition to "the committed."[49] These "centered-set" people, it should be noted, do not necessarily profess to be *believers* in Christ.

Faith in the heart cannot be seen, of course, but it can be said with certainty that members of the "centered set" will quite possibly not be among the baptized. They may never have confessed the Christian faith. What makes them members of the quasi-churchly centered set, then? It is not their doubt or skepticism. Nor is it even their curiosity about God. What else is

37. Schulz, "Missiological Significance," 176. See also Schurb, "The Church as a Baptizing Community."
38. See Bliese and Van Gelder, eds., *The Evangelizing Church*, 127–132, especially 128–130.
39. Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 244.
40. Martin Chemnitz observed that many of the church fathers "bent the article of justification in the direction of works and merits" thus "burying Christ and his benefits" because they were trying to fight false spiritual security and urge a burning zeal for good works. (See Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans. J. A. O. Preus [St. Louis: Concordia, 1989], 470.) There is a lesson for us to learn here.
41. The question is from Bliese and Van Gelder, eds., *The Evangelizing Church*, 37.
42. See Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 201–212 et passim.
43. Ibid., 206.
44. Ibid., 207–208.
45. Ibid., 201.
46. Ibid., 208; the second quote is from note 21.
47. Ibid., 108, 200.
48. Ibid., 209.
49. Ibid., 242, 243.

there to define them as members of this "centered set," except that they make an effort to come to the meetings of Christians for something? Thus the "centered set" is characterized by its members' *behavior*, not their *believing*. For they do not necessarily have saving faith in Christ.

Lutheran theology defines the church as a congregation of believers, not behavers.

It is sobering to read the declaration that "one of the immediate implications of a missional ecclesiology for North America is a critical rethinking of the meaning and practice of church membership."[50] When the dust clears after additional work is done on "the shape of missional communities," where will justification by grace through faith be left in these churches?

A Lutheran approach for the present and the future can be described quite succinctly. Anthony Steinbronn states that the local congregation needs to be "a faith community that stands for something (confessional) and yet is able to provide wide entry points so that the lost might be included and healed (evangelical)."[51] Implementing this pattern has often proven itself a challenge at the congregational level. Now the additional challenge arises to implement it over against a missional model of the church's shape, which by Lutheran lights is shown certainly not to be confessional. Nor is it truly evangelical.

CONCLUSION

At a conference of Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod circuit counselors in September, 2006, Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, told a story about a course on preaching that he continues to teach. When the course begins, he emphatically tells his students that in none of the sermons they write for this course should they say anything encouraging evangelism. That is, these sermons are not to tell people to tell the good news about Jesus.

When Dr. Meyer says, "don't tell," his students don't ask. I can well imagine that they are taken aback. He reported that they usually don't say anything. Perhaps they do not want to get into an argument with the president of the seminary! He added that later in the course, some student almost always become emboldened to ask for the reason behind the unusual instruction. The question gives Meyer an opportunity to tell the class that he wants all of them to preach about Christ the Savior and friend of sinners in such an enticing and endearing way that their hearers will want to tell others about him, even when they are not given any specific directive to do so. Meyer added that he tells his students to feel free in future sermons to encourage evangelism. But he hopes they never forget to preach sweetly about Jesus.

Dr. Meyer's unusual assignment is obviously not designed to deter anyone from telling the good news. On the contrary, it helps to give the gospel the pivotal place it should hold in the minds and hearts of aspiring preachers. First, the assignment takes away from the class a common preacher's excuse: "Well, I told them to do it." Meyer does not let his students salve their consciences in some perfunctory way. The seminarian will not be able to finish the course figuring that he has done his part for evangelism by inserting sentences on the subject into one or more sermon manuscripts.

Even more, with this assignment Meyer forces his future preachers to hone their skills at motivating through the gospel. He takes away their easy tool of law, which at best will only compel short-term compliance. Thus he throws them back upon the good news of Christ, first for themselves and then for their hearers. After all, the sanctified life is empowered by the word that says in Christ the forgiveness of sins and all the riches of heaven are *for you*.[52]

This is better than being "missional." Wherever "missional" thinking labors under the imperative to bring the gospel to everyone else, Lutherans can continue pointing to God's liberating declaration that this great good news is *for you*. Or is it his captivating declaration? Philip Cary writes:

> When the gospel is preached—most clearly of all in the sacraments—Christ himself says 'you' and means me. To believe this word is to learn about myself from another, rather than to trust my own personal experience or feeling. Thus the Lutheran *pro me* does not make faith reflective, but precisely explains why it is unreflective: to believe Christ's word is to be uninterested in the fact that I believe but captivated by what Christ has to say to me.[53] LOGIA

50 Ibid., 245.

51. Anthony J. Steinbronn, *Worldviews: A Christian Response to Religious Pluralism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007), 195.

52. This gospel-centered emphasis will not fall on completely deaf ears. For instance, George Hunsberger, one of the scholars who produced the *Missional Church*, wrote elsewhere that "the first problem with an approach oriented to command-and-obedience, aimed as it is at motivating evangelistic action by a sense of duty, is that this approach mitigates the sense that somehow evangelism ought to be a spontaneous expression, produced by the Spirit and born of the overflowing joy that comes from knowing the good news" (George R. Hunsberger, "Is There Biblical Warrant for Evangelism?" *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 48 [1994]: 133).

53. Cary, "Why Luther is not Quite Protestant," 452.

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Glory and Humiliation in the Theology and Experience of Missions

Anssi Simojoki

Christianity, in general, contains two dimensions, which correspond to both glory and humiliation. I call them dimensions or ends of the same axis rather than exclusive opposites. The goal of this article is to correlate these dimensions with a number of theological and practical issues in contemporary missions.

The history of the church knows oppression and persecution in profusion. According to statistical reports, the twentieth century alone witnessed more Christian martyrs than the preceding eighteen centuries combined. Now that the Communist dinosaurs have become extinct on the global political stage, the pain of being oppressed and persecuted because of the name of the Christ is being felt heavily in Islamic countries. Oppression is also the experience of Christians living among Hindu and Buddhist majorities. The development towards the political and cultural oppression of Christians has already taken initial steps in the secular, democratic West. European countries are evolving from traditional liberal states toward ideological states hostile to creation and its eternal laws, justification by Christ's atoning work, and the holy life. Unlike Islam, Christianity teaches that the life under humiliation and persecution is normal. The church is, after all, the little flock. The biblical example of Jesus strongly points in this direction.

On the other hand, the church never has shied away from influential positions and heavy responsibilities when the time has so demanded. Bishop Ambrose of Milan (ca. 339–397) bore well both the cloak of a bishop and the provisional status of a viceroy of Theodosius the Great in 391. Lutheran national churches of the past offer splendid examples of nationwide catechization, missionary work, and Christian ways of public life and morality. In this dimension the status of a little flock is easily replaced by the concept of kingdom.

Recent historical turmoil may teach some lessons to those rare ones who want to learn something from history. The church as a little flock is not measured out only for a ghetto existence. This is the problem of the fragmented free churches, whereas the concept of kingdom cannot be separated from or extended beyond the true marks of the church. If such a separation or transgression takes place, it will end up in the notorious junk yard of nationalistic and political theology characterizing kingdoms of this world, not the eternal kingdom of Christ.

THE MISSION CONFERENCES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The era before the historic 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh was characterized by Western missionary triumphalism. The historical situation seemed to prove the superiority of the Western Christian culture in all possible ways. The colonial scramble for the world was brought to completion by the scramble for Africa. The expansion of the leading European powers had also brought the cross across the oceans and the continents. For example, the Russian Orthodox Church reached out to Alaska and even California. In conformity with the scramble for the world it seemed possible to conquer all mankind with the gospel. We must, however, keep mission and colonialism apart, although mission permeated the new territories under the protection of colonial powers. Indeed, the cross arrived often with and under the flag. Yet the mission sprang from a root different from the pursuit of a visible empire. For this reason, mission and colonialism time and again found themselves at loggerheads in regard to the plight and treatment of the subjugated nations and tribes.

In a fashion similar to the mission fields, staunch biblical, Protestant faith in the New World had been capable of propelling the United States of America towards Civil War because of the enslavement of black people. Abolitionists in America as well as missionaries on new continents, though descendants of the same culture, claimed the uncompromised validity of *ius divinum* (divine right) in the Holy Writ. This biblical right was against all political and economical calculations favoring unbiblical and inhuman structures.[1]

There were two contrary cultural trends in Europe during the period prior to World War I. The pessimistic tunes became loudly audible only after the disastrous war, formulated in 1918–1922 by Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) in his book *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*. Yet the Darwinist quest for the survival of the fittest and the respective racist mindset betrayed haunting fears concerning the survival of the white European race. This theme surfaces in the literature of the nineteenth century, replacing

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1. Seppo A.Teinonen, *Uudistuva kirkk: Johdatus ekumeniaan*, Avain sarja 32 (Helsinki: Kirjaneliö, 1972), 45–47.

older poetic ideals, and can be easily found, for example, in the works of Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936). The world belongs to those who are biologically, physically, and economically strongest, contrary to the blessed meek inheriting the earth in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:5).[2]

The victory of Japan over Imperial Russia in 1904–1905 disclosed new emerging powers from the East. The "yellow danger" of Asian nations had become an option, at least in pessimistic social-Darwinist minds. The panic reaction caused by biological and cultural pessimism in Europe partly explains the horrifying fact of how extensive the violence became between the two great wars on the continent that only shortly before had been believed to bear the likeness of the kingdom of God. In Bolshevism and Nazism, barbarity exercised by the fittest for survival became a virtue quite in line with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) and, surprisingly, in the tradition of the European idealistic genius cult, which we can find in the *Reden* of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). The racism of Darwinism and the cultural and antimoral radicalism of Nietzsche considered Christian compassion despicable weakness.[3]

The positive cultural notion was built on the worldview of liberal, cultural Protestantism. God's kingdom was seen primarily as a cultural realm of value judgments.[4] Where Protestant Christian values prevailed, God's kingdom was thought to have become a reality. The blind spot of this optimism was its inability to realize that all Western cultural values were not necessarily genuine biblical Christian values to be found in Holy Writ and set forth in the confessions and doctrinal formulas of the churches. On the contrary, the liberal West was bold and quick to demolish the doctrinal structures of classical Christianity. It suffices only to refer to *Apostolikumstreit* (battle over the Apostles' Creed) in Germany since the 1870s.[5] What happened in Germany was not at all unique in the West.

Protestant missions born out of pietistic and evangelical spirituality were strongly colored by biblical eschatological expectations. In principle they were antagonistic to liberal theology. At the same time, however, they depended on such idealistic philosophical and theological concepts, which were familiar also in liberal theology. By and large, these missions shared the cultural optimism of the age. In the wake of the London Centenary Missions Conference in 1888, "The Evangelization of the World in this Generation" became the theological slogan and program of Edinburgh in 1910, together with the slogan, "All should go and go to all." Since then, the junk box of missions has been filled constantly with ingenious and half-forgotten missionary slogans. Encountering the multitude of these slogans, one may wonder whether the wheel has been reinvented time and again in missiology.

THE MISSIOLOGY OF SLOGANS

Indeed, missiology has proved to be a fertile garden of fashionable programs and slogans. A slogan or watchword may be a fitting compression of a problem and its solution, a clear answer to a question like *Missio Dei*, which emerged at the International Missionary Council conference in Willingen, Germany, in 1952.[6] Missionary slogans and shibboleths may also start their own self-multiplying existence as metalanguage, disconnected from their origins, like computer spam. The weakness of a missiology of slogans is akin to the criticism directed in the eighteenth century against orthodoxy. The emerging biblical criticism accused traditional orthodox theology of a methodologically inappropriate use of Holy Writ which they called *dicta probantia* (proof texts): a dogmatic *locus* was believed to be arbitrarily motivated with a sentence from the Scriptures taken completely out of its historical context.[7] Such criticism is not justified in the classic dogmatics,[8] whereas fashionable mis-

2. See Kipling's poem "The 'Mary Gloster,'" 1894.
3. For Schleiermacher, genius is the interpreter of the Deity and his word, reconciler of things that otherwise would be eternally divided, interpreter of the misunderstood voice of God, mediator between limited man and infinite humanity, true priest of the highest, contempt of mediocrity and common man, and so forth (F. Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman [Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994], 1–9). "Superman" in Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, 1883–1885, has absolute freedom from laws that hamper natural selection in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 1886. Russian émigré Roman B. Gul' (1896–1986) published in 1934 a book of the Red Marshals, *красные маршалы* (*Krasnye marshaly*; Finnish edition 1936). The biography of the most illustrious of them, Michail N. Tuhatschevsky (1893–1937), displays Nietzsche's ideals of an enlightened strong barbarian. Tuhatschevsky was a friend of composer Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975), who gives in his memoirs published by S. Volkov in 1979 a cultured Bonapartean picture of this giant who was a brilliant military planner, ruthless soldier, and violin maker as well. The pictures of Gul' and Shostakovitsch are not necessarily exclusive at all.
4. The influential theological key of Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889).
5. Gottfried Hornig, "Lehre und Bekenntnis im Protestantismus," in *Die Lehrentwicklung im Rahmen der Ökumenizitat*, Gustav Adolf Benrath et al., Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte Bd. 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 202–220; D. Dunkel, "Apostolikumstreit," in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz, 4., völlig neu bearb. Aufl. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998–2005), 1:650–651.
6. Tomas Shivute, *The Theology of Mission and Evangelism in the International Missionary Council from Edinburgh to New Delhi*, Annals of the Finnish Society for Missiology and Ecumenics 31 (Helsinki: Finnish Society for Missiology and Ecumenics, 1980), 130–135.
7. J. P. Gabler (1753–1826) in 1787, who distinguished between biblical theology of historical origin, conveying what the holy writers felt about the divine things and dogmatic theology of didactic origin, teaching what each theologian philosophizes rationally about divine things. Werner Georg Kümmel, *Das Neue Testament: Geschichte der Erforschung seiner Probleme*, Orbis Academicus Bd. 3/3 (Freiburg: K. Alber, 1970), 115–124; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Die biblische Theologie: Ihre Geschichte und Problematik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970), 52–59. Gabler's point of departure was based on David Hume's (1711–1776) view on the stepwise evolution of religions from inferior and rude levels up to more elevated ones (*The Natural History of Religion*, 1757). Gabler left the question open whether it would be possible to proceed from the historical data toward a doctrinal totality. Generally, Heikki Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology: A Story and a Programme* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 3–5.
8. A positive historical relationship between the text and the doctrine is illuminated by M. Flacius's (1520–1575) *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae*, 1567. In the field of hermeneutics, Flacius and his followers were later overshadowed by F. Schleiermacher, who shifted the emphasis from the historical text to the personality of the interpreter. In 1976, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) in *Rhetorik und Hermeneutik* employed Flacius as his primary witness for the relevance of the tradition of interpretation. Bengt Hägglund, "Vorkan-tianische Hermeneutik," *Kerygma und Dogma* 52 (2006): 165–181; Rudolf Keller, *Der Schlüssel zur Schrift: Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes bei Matthias Flacius Illyricus*, Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums, neue Folge, Bd. 5 (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1984), 11–22, 156–161.

siological slogans and programs are often exposed to the criticism of proof texts out of their true context. A fitting example is Isaiah 6:8: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The calling of the prophet did not inaugurate a triumphal harvest in Jerusalem but, instead, the commencement of divine hardening whose object was the destruction of the kingdom of Judah.

Luke repeatedly mentions the growth of the church in the initial history of the Christian church, but it is certainly not a missiological method or principle in the New Testament, justifying what Donald McGavran came to teach as "church growth." Instead, the growth of the body of Christ is a trinitarian, christological, and pneumatological mystery which takes place through the apostolic doctrine and administration of the sacraments.[9] Since the days of Edinburgh, missionary propaganda maintains that "all must go and go to all." This is a popular vein in children's mission songs. Yet we read in the New Testament that it was the particular commandment of the Holy Spirit to set apart Barnabas and Saul upon his particular calling of them (Acts 13:2).[10] It is embarrassing to find irresponsible proof texting in so many missiological programs. Most embarrassing is that their connection to the word of God is in danger of being far from genuine.

I do not criticize the changing of programs as such, since it is self-evident that varying conditions in mission work are challenges that demand fitting responses. This was reflected in the mission conferences of the International Missionary Council that followed Edinburgh: the postwar crisis in Jerusalem in 1928, the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God in Tambaram in 1938, the consequences of crumbling colonialism and new nationalism in Whitby in 1947, the quest for the biblical and theological basis of mission in Willingen in 1952, the implications of global political and religious changes in Ghana in 1957–1958, and Christ and cosmos in New Delhi in 1961.[11] What I do criticize, however, is a lightweight, even frivolous manner of using theology as a sort of inaccurate and even misleading language game in missions.

The main source of the aforementioned *dicta probantia* problem of missionary slogans is, in my understanding, the Reformed way of comprehending the word of God. Time and again the reader of missionary documents comes across Reformed ideas concerning the Holy Scriptures. A truly Reformed Christian, as a student of the Bible, is constantly in pursuit of biblical laws and principles concerning Christians and their efforts in mission and evangelization. This is also the understanding of Holy Writ in evangelical Anglicanism. The idea of *kingdom*, which is something apart from the church or the church being seen only as an instrument of the kingdom of God,[12] or the shalom-principle, a true post-World War II theological product,[13] tell of such an approach to the Bible.

Missiology has proved to be a fertile garden of fashionable programs and slogans.

Karl Barth (1886–1968), as the great theological authority of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, pointed in the same direction.[14] When the word of God is primarily the source of principles and laws, the church is also primarily a place in which these principles and laws function. Indeed, Barth emphasized the christological nature of the church, but with his Reformed hermeneutics, his concept of the church completely lacks in ontology. It is an abstract, functionalistic point in history, not an ontological entity.[15] For this reason, Barth's understanding of the confession of faith, which at Barmen in 1934 overcame Hermann Sasse's Lutheran confessionalism, knows no historical continuity.

Contrary to Barth's theology, the Lutheran teaching on confession claims the assertion of the same faith throughout history. The Book of Concord opens with the Ecumenical Symbols. For Barth, however, the confession of faith was always the offspring of the situation in a way similar to his conception of Christian ethics. For this reason, there is no true continuity between acts of confession throughout the history of the church. Whereas the confession of the early church considered the church as a celestial reality on earth—in particular when it celebrated the mystery of the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the sacred liturgy—for Barth and his multiple disciples, the church is an actualistic point in history, with the word of God hitting temporal existence as a meteorite directly from above.

9. Maurice Sinclair, *Ripening Harvest, Gathering Storm: What is the Relevance of the Christian Faith in a World Sliding into Crisis?* (London: MARC, 1988), 27–39, acknowledges correctly the prophetic task of Isaiah to announce the destruction of Jerusalem. The characteristic weakness of this evangelical book as well as of a multitude of others is to appoint Jesus as a special agent of God's mission instead of being also the divine purpose of missions. The trinitarian and christological dogmas play a secondary role compared with functionalistic understanding of God's mission.
10. The act of commissioning Barnabas and Paul to mission work was exclusive, according to K. L. Schmidt, "ἀφορίζω," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (*TDNT*), ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 5:454.
11. Since the assembly of New Delhi, the International Missionary Council was integrated into the World Council of Churches. See Shivute, "Theology of Mission," 47–62.
12. Tambaram 1938 and the Reformed influence (Shivute, "Theology of Mission," 66–90).
13. Emanating from J. C. Hoekendijk (1912–1975) and influencing missiology in the 1950s and during the 1960s; Shivute, "Theology of Mission," 125–131 (Willingen 1952), 155–156 (Ghana 1957–1958); Risto A. Ahonen, *Lähetys uudella vuosituhannella: Maailmanlähetyksen teologiset perustee* (Helsinki: Suomen lähetysseura, 2000), 98–99.
14. Hendrik Kraemer (1888–1965), the author of *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, was a critical but devout disciple of Barth (Shivute, "Theology of Mission," 81–87, in connection with Tambaram 1938).
15. For Hoekendijk, too, church was a place of pure functions (Shivute, "Theology of Mission," 125–131).

For Barth, the word is the law-gospel and the gospel-law pointing to Jesus Christ in the fashion of John the Baptist's finger in Grünewald's Isenheim altar piece.[16] Dietrich Bonhoeffer was familiar with the problem and elaborated on it in his 1931 book *Akt und Sein*.[17]

LWF's* Mission in Context *is completely devoid of Lutheran doctrine.

So overwhelming has the Reformed influence on missions been that it came, by and large, to dominate the concept of the church even within the Lutheranism of the 1960s and 1970s. The Christian church was seen purely in actualistic terms. Following Karl Barth, the function or action of mission was seen as a mark of the church. The 1961 New Delhi conference propelled the triad of *martyria* (witness), *diakonia* (service), and *koinonia* (unity) to a pivotal position in ecclesiology. Such a functionalistic concept emerged from Reformed thinking spiced with Barthian kerygmatic theology.[18] From the heights of ecumenical theology and missiology, in particular, this concept trickled down to the grass roots of various Lutheran churches as well. It was the question of the ordination of women that, in Scandinavia and especially in Finland, compelled Lutheran theology at least to acknowledge that the church is an ontological entity, not only a functionalistic focal point.[19] It is *Sein* (being) in *Akt* (function) and *Akt* in *Sein*. The church truly exists in Christ even if she does nothing.

The disputes concerning the word, the sacraments, and the ministry in the 1980s and 1990s brought the seven marks of the church in Luther's 1539 *Von den Conciliis und Kirchen*[20] to a wider theological prominence than ever before in latter-day theology. Practically, these theological gains were sidelined by church politics that were harnessed to propagate not the pure gospel, but a contemporary, immanent agenda of antivalues such as feminism and androgyny in the society and the church. Being sidelined does not mean, however, that the pure Lutheran notions were lost. They are active, inspiring, and progressive among Lutheran minorities, such as the Swedish-Finnish Mission Province and in the traditional churches.

With this background, the inability of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to voice a clear Lutheran confession on the doctrine of justification in Helsinki in 1963 was, in retrospect, not accidental but symptomatic.[21] Already in the 1970s, the LWF was quickly and entirely swallowed up by a fashionable leftist political theology. The LWF did not distinguish itself doctrinally at all from the World Council of Churches, nor since then has there been any subsequent turn towards a more genuine Lutheran teaching. The latest mission document of the LWF, *Mission in Context*,[22] is a muddle of fashionable liberal, narrative jargons; missions is reduced to living a politically correct way of life in a truly moralistic fashion and telling stories on personally important topics, labeling them the good news.

This recent mission document from Geneva cannot tell anyone what the gospel is and how it is communicated in the world. If one were to ask what the properly Lutheran features of *Mission in Context* are, he would remain with no substantial answer. The entire document from beginning to end is sheer verbal haze. Its language follows conventional Marxist patterns in which traditional terms and expressions are given new meanings arising from theologies different than the original context. As a result, LWF's *Mission in Context* is completely devoid of Lutheran doctrine. No wonder, since the churches that set the trends in the LWF by providing and controlling its finances promote an increasingly liberal agenda alongside dramatically declining mission efforts. For example, after the merger of the official Swedish Church Mission (SKM) and the traditionally pietistic *Fosterlandsstiftelsen* a decade ago, the number of joint missionaries has not doubled, nor remained the same, but plummeted by half.

EXCURSION: POLITICAL THEOLOGY

Liberal and secular theologies have long justified themselves as centers of responsible social religion in opposition to socially and politically illiterate conservative piety or politically hardline, biblicistic fundamentalism arising from the Bible Belt of the United States. The media, as usual, have hungrily swallowed this cliché. This socially responsible religion is usually nothing more than a pious collection of recycled, politically correct, leftist platitudes with some ecclesiastical flavor. The Roman Catholic branches of Liberation Theology enjoy special reverence in this area.

We must never forget that the Lutheran Reformation in Germany in the sixteenth century almost perished under an

16. Hornig, "Lehre und Bekenntnis," 237–248; "Die Offenbarung Gottes gilt al seine fortlaufende Krisis aller Geschichte, keineswegs aber als ein Ereignis in der irdischen Geschichte" (p. 240).
17. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Werke*, vol. 2, *Akt und Sein: Transzendentalphilosophie und Ontologie in der systematischen Theologie*, ed. Hans-Richard Reuter (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1988), 94–96.
18. Shivute, "Theology of Mission," 170–186.
19. Final report of the Synodical Committee on the Office of the Ministry in 1976. After the joint conclusion that the office of the ministry is something which Christ has instituted (*institutum est*), not only a function in the church, the slight majority of three members declared that the conclusion makes the ordination of women possible. The minority of two stated that the conclusion of the majority did not arise from the report itself. This latter statement was supported by a number of scholars of systematic theology at the University of Helsinki.
20. Translated as "On the Councils and the Church" (AE 41: 5–178).
21. Anssi Simojoki, "Martin Luther at the Mercy of His Interpreters: The New Helsinki School Critically Evaluated," in *A Justification Odyssey*, ed. John A. Maxfield, Congress on the Lutheran Confessions 2001 (St. Louis: Luther Academy, 2002), 117–136.
22. *Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment: An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, Department for Mission and Development, 2004).

avalanche of fanatical political enthusiasm. Political religious enthusiasm, *Schwärmerei*, attempted to build up the kingdom of God on the earth either peacefully or by the means of violent revolutions. It would be too long a story in this connection to rehearse the entire collection of political theologies of the twentieth century. We would salute Panslavism, the Living Church in the Soviet Union in the 1920s; *die Glaubensbewegung der deutschen Christen* in Hitler's Germany; ultranationalistic and fascist Christianity—both Catholic and Protestant—in Europe; the official church of the Three Selves in China; Zoltán Káldy's theology of *diakonia* in Communist Hungary; Christian peace movements under the wings of the Soviet Union; and others. What was common to them was a sometimes foolish, sometimes dubious, sometimes even criminal collaboration with tyrants in order to promote the *cause* of the church, whatever that cause may have been.[23]

Contemporary democratic and liberal versions of political theology share the basic problems and weaknesses of all political theology. Their counterpart has been, and still is, biblical faith and piety. This faith scripturally distinguishes between the three modes of God's rule—*regnum gloriae*, *regnum potentiae*, and *regnum gratiae*—as it distinguishes between law and gospel. The genuinely biblical becomes political only when challenged by a political misuse of worldly authority and the name of the Christian faith. The canonical Orthodox Church survived, after all, in the Soviet Union. The German Church Struggle has deeply influenced Christianity. Bishop Káldy's theology serves today as a warning example of the ideological lackeying of a repressive government. The Christian champions of *Pax Sovietica* are today considered a band of fools and crooks. House churches, which are free from the control of the government, are growing in China to such an extent that it surpasses imagination. The verdict of history has not yet been pronounced on the contemporary democratic and liberal vegetation of political theology. Still, it can be analyzed theologically.

Political theology in all possible forms, from revolutionary zeal to nationalistic fascism, from attempts to build a rigid theocracy to political conformity to a libertine culture, shoots up from the theological root which neither knows nor acknowledges the distinction between law and gospel. Neither Rome nor Geneva ever has. The distinction between law and gospel was the bone of contention with Lutheranism in Karl Barth's theology.[24] Therefore, it is quite natural that various mutations of political theology arise from Roman and Reformed traditions. Reality is seen, in the fashion of Islam, on one single level, without distinction between divine and created, transcendent and immanent, secular and sacred or spiritual.

Paradoxically, political theology, though legalistic and moralistic, always overlooks the Decalogue in favor of human political programs, whereas genuine Christian faith follows the law of God, not only personally in the second use, but also in society in the first use, the office of civil law. The Ten Commandments are always the divine measure of a just society.[25] Therefore, the Decalogue must be clearly preached and taught both in the church and society.[26] If this is done biblically, no additional political crutches will be needed. Simultaneously the authentic realms of the state and the church and their boundaries are respected. The challenge to polity in society and government always rises from the law and not from the gospel, as taught by all enthusiasts who confuse the law and the gospel; and not only that, they also confuse the gospel with earthly political programs and movements.[27] The liberal idea of the kingdom of God as the kingdom of values and value judgments has returned in contemporary theology in the form of a decadent libertine ideology that permeates the West: the kingdom of God is the realm of egalitarian democracy, feminism, and sexual perversions!

The Decalogue is neutralized with an overextended teaching of natural law in Romans 2 and the Golden Rule.

There is also another way of theologically circumventing the Decalogue. This is presently the normative teaching in Finland. The Decalogue is neutralized with an overextended teaching of natural law in Romans 2 and the Golden Rule: since all mankind has received the law of God in creation, it follows that all mankind has the natural God-given moral code. Therefore, Christianity can offer only the law of faith (*lex credendi),* but no moral teaching by the authority of the Decalogue, since all men are in the possession of the demands of the divine law by virtue of the Golden Rule. The Decalogue cannot have any positive role in the Christian life. Situation alone is the source of moral knowledge, not the word of God.

23. Hitler's *Reichsbishof*, Ludwig Müller, collaborated with the NSDAP in order to be able to launch a massive popular evangelistic campaign, *Volksmission*, amongst secularised Germans in the 1930s (Klaus Scholder, *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich*, Bd. 1, *Vorgeschichte und Zeit der Illusionen 1918–1934* [Frankfurt/M.: Ullstein, 1980], 663–700; Bd. 2, *Das Jahr der Ernüchterung 1934* [Berlin: W. J. Siedler, 1985], 269–307).
24. Hornig, "Lehre und Bekenntnis," 237–248.
25. Ingemar Öberg, *Bibelsyn och bibeltolkning hos Martin Luther*, Studier i systematisk teologi vid Åbo Akademi 27 (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 2002), 454.
26. Bishop Ambrose of Milan gives a good example of the use of the Decalogue towards the worldly authority. When he excommunicated Emperor Theodosius in 390 the reason was not political but an open breach of the Fifth Commandment, which could not be legally justified—in modernity, one would speak of state terror against citizens (H. von Campenhausen, *Lateinische Kirchenväter*, 2nd ed. [Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1965], 100–102).
27. Behind such confusion is the reasoning that the gospel is always entailed to something positive in the present situation without realizing that this connection is between the law and its demands to the world. Such a tail of "something else" in the name of the gospel is characteristic of Barth's theology.

Thus, the values of the society and culture are being adroitly sanctified regardless of their true nature in the light of the word of God. Antinomianism, which Luther bitterly opposed, is triumphant. Human consensus replaces biblical revelation. The Lundensian School of Theology and Gustaf Wingren have been key sponsors at the cradle of this teaching. Both Barth and Wingren rejected the normative meaning of the Decalogue and subscribed to human spontaneity, whatever this might mean, which never is far from arbitrariness.[28]

Nida's critics strongly challenge the right to call "dynamic equivalence" a theory.

An outgrowth of political theology is "theology of life" (*teología de la vida*) as it is called in El Salvador. It may also serve as a bridge to the idea of *kenosis,* which has played a role in the market of missiological slogans.[29]

KENOSIS

The 1957–1958 IMC Conference in Ghana, following the christological shift in Jerusalem in 1928, enriched the collection of missiological slogans by introducing the term *kenosis* from the christological hymn in Philippians 2:5–11 into missiology. Christ fulfilled the mission of God by becoming a servant. Consequently, the church must adopt in its mission the role of servant in a prophetic, redemptive, and unitive mission.[30]

The idea of κένωσις lately has been elaborated in connection with culture and contextualization. In the wake of Eugene Nida's translation theory, the conference of Willowbank in 1978 resorted to *kenosis* to motivate cultural contextualization in mission work. Since the 1960s, Nida's idea of dynamic equivalence in translation had gained almost the status of a dogma, at least in African translation of the Bible. According to Nida, mission work should not be the transmission of theology like packages from one culture to another. Instead of theological transmission, missionaries should become devoid of their own culture, especially missionaries from the West. They should find the meaning of theology in terms of new cultures as from within them. The traditional Edinburgh triad, namely *self-supporting, self-extending,* and *self-propagating,* should be completed with a fourth, namely *self-theologizing.*[31] In the true fashion of dynamic equivalence, missionaries translate theology into the receptive cultures in their categories and conditions and thus domesticate theology to culture and vice versa. This, in brief, is what is being called *kenosis* in mission work. As such, it has been understood as the opposite of cultural triumphalistic approaches, which disseminate their cultures in the same package with Christianity. Practically, it has motivated shallow doctrine, or the absence of doctrine, in mission work under the cover of "contextualization."

In spite of the impressive eloquence *kenosis* adds to missiology, there is ample space for criticism. First of all, I used the word *idea* to denote Nida's extremely successful linguistic doctrine of dynamic equivalence. I deliberately avoided the common term *theory.* Nida's critics strongly challenge the right to call "dynamic equivalence" a theory. A characteristic of a scientific theory is that it can be controlled by testing. So far, dynamic equivalence has not yielded itself yet to scientific testing. The true functioning of dynamic equivalence cannot be measured in a scientifically reliable way since it does not function in test conditions.[32] Nida also worked in a linguistic environment which made culture out to be the practically absolute obstacle to attaining truth and to translating anything from one language to another.[33]

Historically, Christianity is not at all a foreign religion on the African continent, as the renowned scholar of traditional African religions, Prof. John S. Mbiti, has pointed out. Christianity entered Africa before it entered Europe and has lived in Africa through history until today. Western missions only brought new, strong influxes of Christianity to Africa under the protection of colonial powers. Egyptian, Sudanese, and Ethiopian Christians lived in Africa from time immemorial. Centuries ago, the Portuguese brought Christianity at least to the

28. Jorma Laulaja, *Elämän oikea ja väärä*, 2nd ed. (Helsinki: Kirjapaja, 1994). The Finnish tradition of rejecting the Decalogue goes back to the Lundensian School of Theology and was tuned in accordance with G. Wingren in Lauri Haikola, *Usus Legis*, Uppsala universitets årsskrift, 1958, 3 (Lund: Uppsala universitet, 1958); 2nd ed., Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft 20 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-seura,1981). The position of Barth and Wingren was sharply criticized by Karl-Manfred Olsson, *Kristendom, demokrati, arbete* (Stockholm: LT, 1965), 51–74. He sets it against the background of the philosophy of Kant (1724–1804), who taught that the right moral attitude must be spontaneous and not based on particular commands or pursuit of rewards. The weakness in the teachings of Barth and Wingren is epistemological: How can one without the word of God precisely and correctly understand what a situation demands? Öberg, *Bibelsyn och bibeltolkning*, 454, is critical of Wingren for the same reason: law is in the word and not only in distressing existential experiences. Otherwise, Öberg mantains a modified Lundensian position, which cannot ascribe to the law a positive role in Christian life.

29. Uta Andrée, *Theologie des Lebens: Die lutherische Kirche in El Salvador auf dem Weg des Friedens und der Gerechtigkeit* (Frankfurt/M.: Lembeck, 2005).

30. Shivute, "Theology of Mission," 156–157.

31. Ahonen, *Lähetys*, 190–195; Eugene Nida, *Message and Mission: The Communication of the Christian Faith* (New York: Harper, 1960).

32. J. House, "Quality of Translation," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies,* ed. M. Baker (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), 197–200: "The major weakness of all such response-based suggestions for evaluating translation quality is the same weakness which characterizes all behaviorist approaches, the 'black box,' the human mind, is not taken into account, so that tests involving expert judges, for example, simply take certain criteria for granted that are not developed or made explicit in the first place. This approach is also reductionistic in that the overall quality of a translation is made dependent on measures of, for example, intelligibility and informativeness. Further, what is missing here is a norm against which the results of any behavioral test is to be judged" (p. 198).

33. See such authorities as G. Frege, 1892; L. Wittgenstein, 1922, 1953; W. van O. Quine, 1957–1958, 1959, 1960, 1969; later R. Rorty, 1980, 1982.

Congo estuary, to Southeast Africa, and for a short period, even to East Africa.[34]

Culturally, globalization has radically turned the tables concerning the reasoning behind missiological *kenosis.* There are fewer and fewer isolated cultural pockets in the world. Most cultures have lost their innocence and have become pregnant with other cultures. The situation described by the advocates of cultural *kenosis* simply does not exist anymore in most places. In growing numbers, people want to learn a global *lingua franca* and enter into interaction with the world. Ideas, slogans, and information travel at the speed of light and permanently change peoples' mindsets. Emigration on a gigantic scale is an irrevocable reality, even in closed societies like Cuba and China, with only North Korea excepted. My question is whether the picture of cultures behind the above-described notion of *kenosis* is not only overly eloquent but also hopelessly romantic, belonging rather to the world of Walt Disney and its popular movie *The Lion King,* a fairy-tale world never to be found in Masai Mara, Kenya, and Serengeti, Tanzania.

Theologically, Nida's concept and the corresponding *kenosis*-theologoumenon of Ghana and Willowbank also run against two towering obstacles: first, the meaning of *kenosis* and incarnation in the New Testament and, second, the pursuit of catholicity in the Christian church and her mission. The problem of the overall usage of *kenosis* and incarnation as models for theology and Christian behavior is the contemporary misunderstanding of these key terms as they are used in the New Testament. First and foremost, they are christological; thus, they are unique.

Kenosis refers to the preexistent Lord. His divine essence remains; the mode of being becomes a genuine sacrifice by Christ's voluntary action.[35] The unique self-sacrifice of Christ is motivation for the Christian exhortation to live in humility. In missiology, however, true humility does not mean that Christians should give away their biblical faith and theology. To insist upon such would be the gravest of misunderstandings. On the contrary, the constant apostolic exhortation is for Christians to grow in faith, in the knowledge and understanding of the Holy Scriptures. Personal backgrounds, histories, and cultural diversity cannot be put away just like a towel. Such a naive thought even opposes the basics of post-Kantian philosophy and modern hermeneutics.

What we can do, however, is hold genuine interaction on a common scriptural ground. The incarnation of Christ is much more than a pious model for Christian living. Incarnation was a unique, unrepeatable divine mystery in the history of salvation, not to be confused with our deeds of faith, love, and obedience. Incarnation means, according to Martin Luther, that we meet God in the man Christ Jesus.[36] Indeed, as true members of the body of Christ, in love we serve the will and purpose of the head of this body. Consequently, this directs us to God's word, his holy sacraments, and the office of the ministry, which the Lord Incarnate has instituted for our salvation and for holy life. In this Christian life we glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor 6:20). There is no mention of the incarnation of ideas in our life, as lofty as that may sound.

The Christian faith is primarily universal, even in very particular conditions. Its main concern is not culture but the deposit of faith.

The Christian faith is primarily universal, even in very particular conditions. Its main concern is not culture but the deposit of faith (*depositum fidei*) common to all Christians. Indeed, nationalistic movements and tyrants have often attempted to rule the church by isolating it from other churches and designing for it a narrow agenda, but in the long run with no success. There is also little substantial proof for such self-theologizing as Nida has suggested. There have been champions of so-called new and indigenous theologies that like to place, for example, traditional African or Latin American religions into the position of the Old Testament or even Christianity. After an initial phase of folklore, however, theology must reach up to the catholic in order to be relevant, or it will only attain the questionable status of a provincial curiosity. Therefore scholars of theology from all continents and on all continents are working in growing numbers on catholic, Christian theology.[37]

Since the initial phase of Christendom, language, liturgy, music, and church art have been agents of what is today called contextualization. Languages and artistic expressions of the Christian faith have naturally adopted the new religion and soon influenced Christians of other cultures as well. Consider, for example, Greek and Latin terminology, Armenian and Oriental church art, musical heritage, and so forth.

34. John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (London: Heinemann, 1981), 182–185; John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1989), 229–241.

35 A. Oepke, "κενόω," *TDNT,* 3:661–662 writes against F. Loofs, who maintained with patristic material that *kenosis* here refers to incarnation.

36. Öberg, *Bibelsyn och bibeltolkning*, 516–520.

37. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 267–268, criticized the ideology of Négritude as an elite phenomenon incomprehensible to the common man. Cf. D. A. Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity: African Systems of Thought* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995), 29–37. Jean-Paul Sartre characterized Négritude as a negative moment within a dialectic process and therefore as a historical moment destined to dissolve and destroy itself into a vaster synthesis. Masolo's criticism of Mbiti's immanent understanding of African religion that makes conversion to Christianity unnecessary, because Africans live in the midst of the life without concepts of future such as in Western cultures, 118–121. Ukachukwu Chris Manus, *Intercultural Hermeneutics in Africa: Methods and Approaches* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003), is an ambitious attempt to contextualize Christianity in Africa above a folkloristic level. Yet the book suffers from serious methodological and theological flaws.

There is one disturbing success story, however, that vigorously resists the customary clichés of how it would be necessary for a religion to be contextualized if it were to conquer new peoples and cultures. Around the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, Islam spread to Western Africa and to the Pacific Ocean in a tremendous surge. The translation of the Quran into the myriad of languages has never been a genuine Islamic preoccupation. Instead, the Arabic language and Arabic culture have domesticated nations and cultures of all possible description. In terms of missiological theories, this never should have happened, just as in terms of school physics, bumblebees should never be able to fly. But, as we know, bumblebees do fly, and Islam does spread and will spread on a scale surpassing our imagination.

THE WORD OF GOD IN GLORY AND HUMILIATION

As already noted, Protestant missiology has, by and large, been under the sway of Reformed theology. The Reformed concept of the word of God has produced missiological slogans in profusion as they have sought laws and principles in the Bible. Lutheran missions have more or less obediently followed suit. The Lutheran World Federation has not distinguished itself in creating genuine Lutheran missiology. For a long time, it was quite widely—and erroneously—believed that Dr. Martin Luther had nothing, or very little, to contribute to missiology. Those times of ignorance should surely be over. At least after the massive volume of the late Ingemar Öberg, a strong contributor to the work of North European Luther Academy, it should be crystal clear that Luther was, in teaching and practice, and as *doctor ecclesiae*, a man of Christian missions.

Luther was not after principles and slogans. For him, the church has received in the Bible the word of God. The Bible is not a collection of principles and codes, but is the self-revelation of the living God, and this word of God creates the reality it speaks about. The work of mission simply means that the word of God must reach out to all the nations of the world. In the so-called Synoptic Apocalypse (see Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21), this is the primary driving force of history: the gospel of the kingdom must be preached to all the nations.[38] Only then the end will come. This is more and more the reality surrounding us. This driving force of the end times is wrapped in the cloak of suffering and persecutions. What is seen and experienced in missions is primarily humiliation, suffering, and death before the potentates of this world. However, concealed within this outwardly shameful clothing is the glory of God, the irresistible triumph of the eternal gospel that will finally slay even death.

With this statement not all has been said that should be said. It would be alarming if theologians and Christians who disagree concerning all other key issues of the Christian faith still would stand united concerning the true content of the gospel. It suffices to refer to the recent mission document of the Lutheran World Federation. The quest for the true content and meaning of the gospel strongly questions the reasoning behind the cultural *kenosis:* missiology. The gospel is God's saving mystery in Jesus Christ: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" as St. Paul quotes Isaiah in 1 Corinthians 2:9. God's mystery is a revealed mystery. The revelation thus means that it is not incomprehensible. It can be preached with human words and be received with full human understanding, not in a state of trance such as the oracles of Delphi or the shamans of Siberia. It is not like Muhammad's preaching in the Quran according to one *pensée* of the French mathematician Blaise Pascal (1623–1662): "Some people say that his incomprehensible words are mysteries. But why hold Muhammad's incomprehensible words for mysteries as his comprehensible words are ridiculous?"

Indeed, the gospel may be scandalous for this world but it still has clear content by virtue of God's word. This content opens up for us in the word of God. Since the vehicle is the word—language—it means that the gospel can be verbally expressed and translated into all languages. This is the deposit of faith in its genuine biblical meaning. Since the deposit of faith is expressible in all languages it has universal, divine, and catholic content. This content is extremely rich and at the same time clear because it is christological. The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians does not suggest any sort of *kenosis* concerning the knowledge of this mystery or deposit; on the contrary, Christians are expected to grow in this knowledge because such growth is the constant work of the Holy Spirit.

What does this mean for mission work? Too often, various missions—Lutheran missions included—tread a minimalistic path in teaching and practice. Evangelization and mission are treated in a fashion similar to children's preschool or Sunday School classes: do not be bothered by the deposit of faith beyond the skin-deep level when the rich, white uncle or aunt is speaking to the happily childish people in Africa and Asia! Who can claim that this is what the nations yearn for? My limited experience as a translator, publisher, and teacher of Lutheran literature in Africa suggests the absolute opposite. Those who are hungry are hungry for the real thing.

The deposit of faith challenges the entire world, as St. Paul sets it forth in 2 Corinthians 10:4–6. By its nature, the eternal gospel denies righteousness and salvation from all human institutions and efforts. Therefore it always faces hostility to varying degrees. Only the strong and powerful can provoke real hostility. This is a reflection of the hidden glory of true biblical mission work, carried out in humility and suffering—and with resolution as well. LOGIA

38. Ingemar Öberg, *Luther och världsmissionen: Historisk-systematiska studier med särskild hänsyn till bibelutläggningen*, Studier utgivna av institutionen for systematisk teologi vid Åbo Akademi, 23 (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1991), 23. English translation: *Luther and World Missions: A Historical and Systematic Study with Special Reference to Luther's Bible Exposition,* trans. Dean Apel (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007).

The Destruction of Images

Using Law and Gospel to Restore and Maintain Lutheran Sacramental Piety

Thomas L. Rank

Crucifixes, statuary, relics, and other man-made depictions of spiritual and biblical themes were commonplace in the church of the Middle Ages. Because of the superstitious abuses associated with them, such images became natural targets for those desiring the reformation of the church. The Lutheran reformers took note of the abusive use of images.

> Men venerated these [images] and thought they contained some sort of magical power, just as sorcerers imagine that horoscopes carved at a particular time contain power. In one monastery we saw a statue of the blessed Virgin which was manipulated like a puppet so that it seemed to nod Yes or No to the petitioners. (Ap xxi, 34)

There was agreement on the need to address and change the perception and use of images within the church. But how best to do it? This is where division erupted between Martin Luther and Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt. "I approached the task of destroying images by first tearing them out of the heart through God's Word and making them worthless and despised" (AE 40: 84). With these words Martin Luther differentiated his approach to the "task of destroying images" from that used by Karlstadt, his theological opponent.

What was Karlstadt's method for dealing with images in the church? Why was Luther finally compelled to address Karlstadt so firmly in his writing *Against the Heavenly Prophets*? The answers to these questions are of more than historical importance. They shed light today on the important distinction between using laws, old or new, to force the acceptance of a certain piety, and using the proper application of law and gospel to teach the people to love and request the gifts of God given through holy word and blessed sacrament (with the consequent rejection of superstition).

The application of the lessons learned from the debate between Karlstadt and Luther on the destruction of images is the reverse of early Reformation times. Whereas they debated how best to remove abuses, the topic of this article is more how best to add lost treasures back into the church.

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KARLSTADT AND IMAGES

From May 1521 to March 1522 Martin Luther was safely ensconced in the Wartburg Castle, away from the dangers to his life brought about as a consequence of his excommunication through the papal bull *Exsurge Domine*. However, his absence left the theological leadership in Wittenberg adrift. Andreas Karlstadt eventually assumed that leadership. He began implementing a variety of substantial changes in the mass, such as officiating in street clothes, communion in both kinds, saying mass in the vernacular. Images, relics, statues of saints, and crucifixes also came under attack. A start at their forcible removal from the Wittenberg churches was made in early 1522.[1]

Karlstadt was unwilling to go slowly or cautiously either in the eradication of images or in the imposition of changes in the mass such as the removal of the elevation of the host. Luther's hurried return to Wittenberg in March 1522 brought an abrupt end to Karlstadt's hastily attempted reforms in Wittenberg. However, he continued those same reforms in Orlamünde with the same impetuous and hasty approach that he had used in Wittenberg. Karlstadt's approach to reform is illustrated by his writing, *Whether One Should Proceed Slowly and Avoid Offending the Weak in Matters that Concern God's Will*.

> I will show you that he who would forcibly break the will of fools would manifest toward them the brotherly love which is genuine and best . . . .Therefore, I ask whether, if I should see that a little innocent child holds a sharp pointed knife in his hand and wants to keep it, I would show him brotherly love if I would allow him to keep the dreadful knife as he desires with the result that he would wound or kill himself, or would I break his will and take the knife? You must always say that if you take from the child what brings injury to him, you do a fatherly or brotherly Christian deed. For Christ has depicted for us genuine Christian and brotherly love in the passages where he says, "If your hand offends you, cut it off and throw it from you" (Matt. 18:8).[2]

1. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985–1993), 2:39-40.
2. Carter Lindberg, *The Third Reformation: Charismatic Movements and the Lutheran Tradition* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 69.

At the heart of Karlstadt's intense contempt of images and his consequent desire to rid the church of them quickly was his understanding of how the Christian life developed and grew. Not understanding the truth that the law always accuses, or apparently the devastating effect of the law on poor consciences, he taught that the law was a positive force for regeneration.

> The fundamental question for Karlstadt was not "How do I find a gracious God?" but rather "How can man fulfill the law of God?" . . . The true sense of the law is first understood by the spiritually reborn man whose freed spirit now understands the spirit of the law. The gospel is understood in the sense of a new law (*nova lex*), a law of the spirit and life (*lex spiritus et vitae*) mediated by Christ. The Christian is thus given the power to do good works. These are the presuppositions for a second justification, a justification by the law which is an advancing sanctification through the fulfillment of the law.[3]

Images must be completely and quickly abolished, according to Karlstadt. They are a direct assault against the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me," and its further explication, "You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them" (Ex 20:3–5). Since Karlstadt saw images as an external assault against the Christian's inner harmony with Christ, the creaturely and fleshly images were encumbrances to true inner spiritual growth.

Luther already in 1522 took steps to curb the influence of Karlstadt's teaching in Wittenberg.

> The danger to salvation posed by misplaced love of creatures explains Karlstadt's horror of idolatry and images. Already in his 1522 tract on the abolition of idols he was speaking in terms of a flesh/Spirit dichotomy with reference to John 6:63, the spiritualist *locus classicus*. Since idols are of the flesh they profit nothing; only the Word of God is spiritual and profits the faithful.[4]

Karlstadt tried to effect an immediate casting away of all images because of his spiritualizing tendencies. The physical, worldly, and external were seen as inherently evil, and therefore not only of no value for the Christian, but actually harmful by their very nature. The spiritual, the inner, was the realm of true and vital Christian living. While there is some truth to this, the tree must be good in order to produce good fruit, the overemphasis on the inner to the exclusion of and legalistic condemnation of the external led Karlstadt eventually even to deny the efficacy of the sacraments.

LUTHER AND IMAGES

As noted above, Luther already in 1522 took steps to curb the influence of Karlstadt's teaching in Wittenberg. The eight sermons preached by Luther at the beginning of Lent in 1522 were directed precisely against the reforms initiated by Karlstadt during Luther's stay at the Wartburg Castle. He detected in Karlstadt a satanic spirit.

> For here we battle not against pope or bishop, but against the devil (Eph 6:12), and do you imagine he is asleep? He sleeps not, but sees the true light rising, and to keep it from shining into his eyes he would like to make a flank attack—and he will succeed, if we are not on our guard. I know him well, and I hope, too, that with the help of God, I am his master. But if we yield him but an inch, we must soon look to it how we may be rid of him. Therefore all those have erred who have helped and consented to abolish the mass; not that it was not a good thing, but that it was not done in an orderly way. (AE 51: 72)

This apparent harsh condemnation of Karlstadt is understandable when examined from Luther's theological perspective. Karlstadt's emphasis on the legal approach to church reform and his demand for the destruction of images were a return to the very monastic abuses against which Luther preached and taught. Luther saw in Karlstadt the exchange of the pope's laws for new laws, laws no less demanding or conscience-binding than those of Rome. Such legalism attacked the doctrine of justification and threatened the freedom of the gospel. At stake for Luther was the certainty of salvation and the pastoral care of souls in need of the forgiveness of sins. Any proponent of a theological system that undermined justification and effected the consequent torturing of souls with the uncertainty of human works would find only severe criticism from Martin Luther.

Karlstadt's approach to the abuses of images was noted above: "I will show you that he who would forcibly break the will of fools would manifest toward them the brotherly love which is genuine and best." Contrast Luther's method: "And here, dear friends, one must not insist upon his rights, but must see what may be useful and helpful to his brother" (AE 51: 72). "I would not have gone so far as you have done, if I had been here. The cause is good, but there has been too much haste" (AE 51: 72).

Why was Luther critical of the haste of Karlstadt? Luther distinguished between that which was required and that which was free. Images, Luther contended, were a matter of Chris-

3. Ibid., 74.
4. Ibid., 67.

tian freedom. In the first sermon at Wittenberg in Lent 1522, he preached:

> Take note of these two things, "must" and "free." . . . Now do not make a "must" out of what is "free," as you have done, so that you may not be called to account for those who were led astray by your loveless exercise of liberty (AE 51: 74).

The next day he continued on the same theme:

> Thus, there are two things, the one, which is the most needful, and which must be done in one way and no other; the other, which is a matter of choice and not of necessity, which may be kept or not, without endangering faith or incurring hell. . . . Christian love should not employ harshness nor force the matter. (AE 51: 75)

Karlstadt's haste compelled people into action by destroying images, an act that they did not fully understand because they were not taught the real reasons for removing images.

Luther's pastoral approach to questions of how and when to institute needed reform in the church is this:

> We have the *jus verbi* (right to speak) but not the *executio* (power to accomplish). We should preach the Word, but the results must be left solely to God's good pleasure (AE 51: 76).
>
> We must first win the hearts of the people (AE 51: 76).

Winning the hearts of the people, Luther insisted, was of utmost importance. For once the heart was right, then abuses would be cast away without coercion and reform would be welcomed. Luther pointed to St. Paul at Athens:

> Once, when Paul came to Athens . . . he found in the temple many ancient altars, and he went from one to the other and looked at them all, but he did not kick down a single one of them with his foot. Rather he stood up in the middle of the market place and said they were nothing but idolatrous things and begged the people to forsake them; but he did not destroy one of them by force. When the Word took hold of their hearts, they forsook them of their own accord, and in consequence the thing fell of itself. (AE 51: 77)

And in these words Luther summarized his own way of bringing about reform.

> I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything. (AE 51: 77)

Luther did not desire an increase in images, nor even necessarily keeping them. "I am not partial to them," he said (AE 51: 81). However, when Karlstadt forcibly removed them and called Christian freedom into question, Luther stood against his biblicism and legalism.

> And you rush, create an uproar, break down altars, and overthrow images! Do you really believe you can abolish altars in this way? No, you will only set them up more firmly (AE 51: 83).

The external, physical image was not the main problem for Luther. What did distress him was when images were set up as good works (AE 51: 84), calling into question the certainty of salvation. Outward images were of themselves indifferent matters. It was necessary to change the heart's attitude toward them. As Luther later concluded in the Large Catechism, "Idolatry does not consist merely of erecting an image and praying to it. It is primarily in the heart, which pursues other things and seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints, or devils" (LC I, 21).

Three years after the eight sermons of Lent 1522, Luther again confronted Karlstadt. Karlstadt's legalistic reforms in Orlamünde became known to Luther. He responded with his work known as *Against the Heavenly Prophets*. Luther reiterated and strengthened his earlier contentions in regard to images.

> When they are no longer in the heart, they can do no harm when seen with the eyes (AE 40: 84).
>
> And I say at the outset that according to the law of Moses no other images are forbidden than an image of God which one worships. A crucifix, on the other hand, or any other holy image is not forbidden (AE 40: 84–85).

Luther's pastoral heart is in evidence once more.

> The meaning is not that I wish to defend images. Rather murderous spirits are not to be permitted to create sins and problems of conscience where none exist, and murder souls without necessity. For although the matter of images is a minor, external thing, when one seeks to burden consciences with a sin through it, as through the law of God, it becomes the most important of all. For it destroys faith, profanes the blood of Christ, blasphemes the gospel, and sets all that Christ has won for us at naught, so that this Karlstadtian abomination is no less effective in destroying the kingdom of Christ and a good conscience, than the papacy has become with its prohibitions regarding food and marriage, and all else that was free and without sin. (AE 40: 90–91)

Luther's criticism was not about the images in and of themselves, but about the binding of consciences to man-made laws. He saw this as "murdering souls" because the souls are made to look other than to Christ for salvation. Added to the burden of poor sinners is the new Karlstadt law obligating everyone to abolish all images. Against such soul-destroying legalism Luther reacted vehemently.

As in his earlier 1522 sermons, so again Luther desired that images be broken not outwardly, but inwardly.

> One is obligated, however, to destroy them with the Word of God, that is, not with the law in a Karlstadtian manner, but with the gospel. This means to instruct and enlighten the conscience that it is idolatry to worship them, or to trust in them, since one is to trust alone in Christ. Beyond this let the external matters take their course. (AE 40: 91)

Christian instruction through teaching and preaching was the way Luther desired to rid the church of the abuse of images. The proper application of the word of God, trusting the word to do that for which it is sent, this would bring true reformation, reformation of the hearts of the people so that they trust not their obedience to the regulations of any man, but Jesus Christ their Savior.

RESTORING LUTHERAN SACRAMENTAL PIETY

Lutheran sacramental piety is the expression of faith that demonstrates its reliance upon the gifts of God in word and sacrament as the sure ways of obtaining and retaining salvation through the merits of Jesus Christ. It is the belief that God himself is at work through these blessed means, so that the Christian at the divine service can join in the confession of Jacob at Bethel, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" (Gn 28:17, NKJV). Such piety trusts that in holy baptism "grace is offered" (AC IX, 1), that in the Holy Supper "the true body and blood are really present . . . under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received" (AC X, 1), and that in the absolution "we should . . . firmly believe that the forgiveness of sins is granted us freely for Christ's sake and that we should be sure that by this faith we are truly reconciled to God" (Ap XI, 2). Lutheran sacramental piety is the life of faith that revolves around these gifts of God.

More important than external expressions of piety is teaching love for the gospel in all its forms.

But how to restore and maintain such piety when so many factors are at work against it? The same forces that broke Lutheranism in Germany, Pietism and rationalism, remain potent today. Günther Stiller, in his study *Johann Sebastian Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig*, notes:

> We cannot emphasize it strongly enough that by itself neither Pietism nor rationalism was able to contribute anything decisive to the intensification of public worship life, for both the ideal promoted by Pietism, conventicle Christianity, and rationalism's view of worship as an arrangement for educational purposes could not contribute to the upbuilding of Lutheran worship practices but had to work destructively.[5]

Add to these destructive forces a rabid Romophobia in parts of American Lutheranism, which views anything remotely resembling Roman Catholic practice with suspicion (consider the resistance in some places to private confession and weekly Communion, and externals like crucifixes, making the sign of the cross, genuflecting, the adoration of the host, and so forth), and a pernicious enthusiasm in the form of the charismatic movement. Finally, the generic Protestant culture in which the American Lutheran church exists, acts as an eroding power on the distinctive Lutheran liturgical life.

The temptation is to react with Karlstadtian haste against the many forces arrayed against Lutheran sacramental piety. Here caution must be exercised. Dr. Sasse noted, "We have to face the fact that a heritage that has been lost for over 250 years cannot be restored quickly."[6] Also, distinctions need to be made between those things that are most beneficial to souls sick with sin (the "must" Luther describes above) and those things that may safely be left in the realm of Christian freedom. An example of such a freedom is making the sign of the cross during one's private devotions, as one receives the sacrament, or at any other time. This is a worthy practice that is a reminder of the crucifixion of our Lord and our own connection with his death through baptism. But the making of the sign of the cross cannot be imposed or demanded. Nor, on the other hand, should its removal be demanded or coerced. Either way makes a "must" out of what is "free."

More important than external expressions of piety is teaching love for the gospel in all its forms. "Our clergy instruct the people about the worth and fruits of the sacraments in such a way as to invite them to use the sacraments often" (Ap XI, 3). Melanchthon echoes Luther's method, to win the hearts of people through preaching and teaching. Patient instruction, as opposed to coercive demands, not only leads people to a proper understanding and appreciation of God's gifts, but also, and equally important, helps in the prevention of new laws that burden souls with human demands.

What is the content of the instruction that leads people to desire and love God's gifts of word and sacrament? The simple answer is: law and gospel. As long as people are content with the gods they themselves create, there will be little need, as they see it, to trust the Triune God or to desire his gifts. The law must drive people to despair, to see that their gods finally do not work. The accusatory power of the law must be applied so that no room is left for reliance on one's favorite gods. When the law does its proper work, the gospel follows. The gospel is for-

5. Günther Stiller, *Johann Sebastian Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig*, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman, Daniel F. Poellot, Hilton C. Oswald (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 103.
6. Hermann Sasse, "Word and Sacrament: Preaching and the Lord's Supper," in *We Confess the Sacraments*, trans. Norman Nagel, We Confess Series 2 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1985), 34.

giveness of sins, life, and salvation through faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. And where is the gospel found? The gospel is found in the gifts of God: powerful word, baptism, absolution, Supper (SA, III, IV).

When the sickness of sin is revealed in all its deadliness by the law, the desire for the medicine of the gospel increases. Luther emphasizes the beneficial medicine of each of the sacraments in the Large Catechism:

> Now here in baptism there is brought free to every man's door just such a priceless medicine which swallows up death and saves the lives of all men (LC IV, 43). Rather we advise: If you are poor and miserable then go and make use of the healing medicine. He who feels his misery and need will develop such a desire for confession that he will run toward it with joy (LC VI, 27).
>
> We must never regard the sacrament as a harmful thing from which we should flee, but as a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine which aids and quickens us in both soul and body (LC V, 68).

The priceless, healing, and soothing medicine is what the Lutheran Church dispenses by God's command and promise. The gospel is the medicine of immortality, which gives life to those surrounded by death.[7] Love for the gifts of God, the gospel medicine, comes only through the work of God the Holy Spirit, convicting of sin and calling to faith. "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith" (SC II, 6). Therefore those whom God has placed in the office of the holy ministry are called to preach the word faithfully; the results are in the hands of God. God, through his word, will bring about what he desires. This is the pastoral wisdom Luther followed at Wittenberg in opposition to the anti-image crusade of Karlstadt. Burdened consciences continue to need the gospel, and that is what lies at the heart of Lutheran sacramental piety.

7. Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil,* trans. Eileen Walliser-Scwarzbart (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 330.

Lutheran sacramental piety will, by God's grace, be restored where the gospel is preached and the sacraments rightly administered. It will be maintained in the same way. Such piety cannot truly be maintained or restored through the use of laws, old or new. A legalistic approach to desired change in the church may bring about external adjustments to piety, but what matters is the state of the heart. The heart is addressed only by the gospel.

Love for the gifts of God, the gospel medicine, comes only through the work of God the Holy Spirit.

Martin Luther correctly identified Karlstadt's method of reform as a return to the uncertainty that marked the Roman order of salvation. Luther understood that the gospel does not allow for the replacing of one set of laws for a better set of laws, no matter how well-intentioned. In either case the gospel is sabotaged.

The law is silenced and put in its place by the active and passive obedience of Christ. The blessings of Christ's obedience, "even to the point of death," are God's free gifts. These gifts are gospel brought through word and sacrament. The gospel quiets troubled consciences, strengthens hearts terrorized by sin, death, and the devil, and gives hope to despairing sinners. Where these gifts of God are given, there Lutheran sacramental piety will, by God's grace, flourish.

In these last days of sore distress
Grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness
That pure we keep, till life is spent,
Thy holy Word and Sacrament.

Thy Word shall fortify us hence,
It is Thy Church's sure defense;
O let us in its pow'r confide,
That we may seek no other guide. (*ELH* 511) LOGIA

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"Freedom Shall Be and Remain a Servant of Love"

Distinguishing Faith and Love as a Criterion for Liturgical Practice in Luther's Theology

Holger Sonntag

Luther's approach to the question of diversity and uniformity in liturgical practice among congregations was governed by a clear distinction between faith and love, law and gospel. He interpreted this question through the lens of our relationship both to God (*coram deo*) and to our fellow men (*coram hominibus*). While the gospel and faith govern the former, law and love govern the latter. This is why Luther, in *On the Freedom of a Christian* (1520), summarized the Christian life with these paradoxical, though biblical affirmations: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all" (AE 31: 344). In this bound freedom, the Christian is like Christ.

In this treatise, written three years prior to his formal proposals for liturgical reform, Luther also applied these insights to the liturgy. Faith in Christ not only frees from sin, death, and the devil, but it also offers the highest worship.

> When the soul firmly trusts God's promises, it regards him as truthful and righteous. Nothing more excellent than this can be ascribed to God. The very highest worship of God is this that we ascribe to him truthfulness, righteousness, and whatever else should be ascribed to one who is trusted. (AE 31: 350)

Faith in Christ's promise alone fulfills the First Commandment. For Luther, it does this by giving glory solely to Christ for our salvation. It also adds God-pleasing luster to good works. Our endeavors become genuine expressions of worship precisely when our focus is not on them but on the work of Jesus Christ. There is no true worship apart from faith. As faith passively receives Christ's perfect fulfillment of the law and mystically unites us with Christ, it likewise grants the power for actively fulfilling the remaining commandments (AE 31: 350–353).

While faith in the promise is the highest worship, Luther argues that it is by no means the only worship we are called to offer to God. Faith is to be distinguished from love. The former does not replace the latter.

> We do not, therefore, reject good works; on the contrary, we cherish and teach them as much as possible. We do not condemn them for their own sake but on account of this godless addition to them and the perverse idea that righteousness is to be sought through them; for that makes them appear good outwardly, when in truth they are not good. (AE 31: 363)

These works are necessary because men relate to God by a dual relationship: to their body, that is, the old Adam, and to their neighbor. With respect to the sinful self, works discipline and purge us, increasingly driving sin out of our lives. In relation to the neighbor in need, works put service into action. Self-discipline, then, is not a goal in itself. Restraining egoism and selfishness is done so that the neighbor might be served better (AE 31: 358–359, 364–366). Good works are necessary for the neighbor's well-being.

This insight leads Luther to a theological reevaluation of worship prior to any practical suggestions for liturgical reform. Since man is justified by faith alone for the sake of Christ alone, these works cannot elevate the soul *coram deo*. They can be useful only in relation to his body and, chiefly, in relation to the neighbor (*coram hominibus*). Luther early on detected an abuse of Christian freedom, which he specified as another form of legalism. Whereas people prior to the resurgence of true evangelical freedom were taught to trust in their works, they now were taught to trust in their *not* doing certain works. Both extremes were wrong and needed to be replaced by a middle course. Luther charted this middle course based on God's word, which clearly distinguished faith and love, law and gospel. Works are excellent when done by faith in Christ; works are an abomination when done by faith in the works themselves (AE 31: 371–373).

Luther used this paradigm of the middle course to help him evaluate the benefit of ceremonies. They are good insofar as faith is not put in them per se; instead they are to be used to discipline the old Adam and to aid the neighbor. Specifically in relation to the neighbor, Luther made careful pastoral distinctions in view of the neighbor's spiritual state. For timid believers, observing ceremonies that are in themselves free is necessary lest they be offended and lose their weak faith. Drawing on 1 Corinthians 8 and Romans 14, Luther stated this about a Christian's duty of love:

> He must yield to their weakness until they are more fully instructed. Since they do and think as they do, not because they are stubbornly wicked, but only because their faith is weak, the fasts and other things which they consider necessary must be observed to avoid giving them offense. This is the command of love which would harm no one but

> would serve all men. . . . Observe the laws with the weak so that they will not be offended, until they also recognize tyranny and understand their freedom. If you wish to use your freedom, do so in secret, as Paul says, Rom. 14[:22], "The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God"; but take care not to use your freedom in the sight of the weak. (AE 31: 373–374)

Luther taught that ceremonies play an important role to instruct in faith. Ceremonies likewise serve the neighbor, especially in instructing the young.

> The inexperienced and perverse youth need to be restrained and trained by the iron bars of ceremonies lest their unchecked ardor rush headlong into vice after vice. On the other hand, it would be death for them always to be held in bondage to ceremonies, thinking that these justify them. They are rather to be taught that they have been so imprisoned in ceremonies, not that they should be made righteous or gain great merit by them, but that they might thus be kept from doing evil and might more easily be instructed to the righteousness of faith. Such instruction they would not endure if the impulsiveness of their youth were not restrained. (AE 31: 375)

Because ceremonies force us to practice a disciplined, humble life in relation to the first table of the Law, Luther called them "models"[1] for a life of sacrificial service as a whole. These plans can only be set aside when the building, this life, itself is completed. However, Luther did not expect this to happen on earth. Ceremonies and their "iron bars"[2] therefore "are not despised, rather they are greatly sought after" for Christians of all ages. Only in the life of the world to come will there be no more need for such models and plans (AE 31: 375–376). For now, however, the Sunday divine service trains the Christian for ordered, vocational service to the neighbor during the remainder of the week by exercising him in both the passivity of faith and the activity of love.[3] Ceremonies are thus a prominent example of how works, when rightly understood, serve the dual purpose of disciplining our impulsive youthful, that is sinful, selves, and serving our neighbor, the former being a necessary precondition for the latter.

Luther's forceful metaphors—iron bars, bondage, imprisoned—suggest that he is rejecting constant liturgical experimentation and novelty, lest people, especially the young, become accustomed, not to self-discipline and perseverance, but to change itself. Since the purpose of the liturgy is to teach the faith, particularly in a practical, hands-on way, what Luther said about catechetical instruction might well be added here.

> *In the first place*, the preacher should above all take care to avoid changes or variations in the text and version . . . but instead adopt a single version, stick with it, and always use the same one year after year. For the young and the unlearned must be taught with a single fixed text and version. Otherwise, if someone teaches one way now and another way next year—even for the sake of making improvements—the people become quite easily confused, and all time and effort will go for naught. (SC Pref. 7)[4]

While Luther clearly affirmed the beneficial necessity of ceremonies, he also saw that, similar to all law, they will be abused by our self-justifying nature. This is due to man's sinfulness, and also because our apparent reliance on works is confirmed by the law for ordering society. The possible and real abuses of the law (and of ceremonies) obviously did not lead Luther to abolish the law, but rather to look to God to teach the truth of the gospel in people's hearts (AE 31: 376–377). This happens chiefly by means of ceremonies as structured by the gospel.

Luther applied this foundational paradigm to theological challenges in later years. It served him well as he combated ritualists, iconoclasts, revolutionaries, and antinomians. And it helped him address the emerging liturgical dilettantism and its pastoral problems. We will now turn to this issue with its relevance to our current debates over worship.

In the preface to the Small Catechism (1529), Luther specifically expressed his care for the weak believer's conscience. Change in the basic catechetical texts—and considering what Luther wrote already in 1520 we do well to include the liturgy here—is to be avoided because it is confusing and prevents what is taught from shaping, or taking root in, one's heart and mind.

This concern is evident already in his *Latin Order of Mass and Communion* (*Formula Missae* [1523]). In the preface Luther stated that he first taught the people only the difference between faith and love, and law and gospel in order to wean them from their false trust in ceremonies. He wrote that he refrained from innovations.

> For I have been hesitant and fearful, partly because of the weak in faith, who cannot suddenly exchange an old and accustomed order of worship for a new and unusual one, and more so because of the fickle and fastidious spirits who rush in like unclean swine without faith or reason, and who delight only in novelty and tire of it as quickly, when it has worn off. Such people are a nuisance even in other affairs, but in spiritual matters, they are absolutely unbearable. (AE 53: 19)

1. The Latin original has *praeparamenta* (preparations). See *Martin Luther: Studienausgabe*, ed. H.-U. Delius (Berlin: Ev. Verlagsanstalt, 1982), 2:308, lnn. 8, 14.
2. For Luther, the second table of the Ten Commandments in particular represents God's iron bars around our neighbor; this understanding reflects Luther's biblical anthropological realism that did not have to deny the raging beast in fallen man. See A. Peters, *Kommentar zu Luthers Katechismen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 1:90–91.
3. See below on Luther's 1526 catechism proposal in the *German Mass*.
4. Quotations from the Book of Concord are taken from Kolb-Wengert.

Change confuses the weak and encourages fickle spirits who only seek novelty. It fails to build the church by implanting the word of faith in the heart. However, after teaching has been offered and is rooted, it needs to be reinforced by ceremonies configured by the gospel, which purges the ancient order of the mass of recent abominations (AE 53: 20–22). Luther reconfigured the inherited liturgy in light of the Lord's Supper. The Supper, understood as gospel (AE 53: 22), provided him a standard by which to determine those parts of the mass that should be retained from those that contradict the gospel and should be excised. Luther thus reformed the traditional liturgy with God's word in hand. He did not start from scratch by casting aside fifteen hundred years of liturgical development, much of which was good. Indeed, there was an "ancient purity" in the mass (AE 53: 21). He concluded that "when everyone felt free to add or change at will" (AE 53: 21), then abominations like the canon of the mass were added.

Luther taught that ceremonies play an important role to instruct in faith.

While combating change for its own sake and retaining much of the ancient order, he continued to emphasize that even a liturgical order with such a noble pedigree, and with Luther as author, cannot be made into a conscience-binding law for Christians who are, after all, children of the free woman (AE 53: 30–31). Two years later, in 1525, liturgical diversity and theological confusion had increased. Luther addressed this issue in his famous letter to Christians in Livonia "concerning public worship and concord," and described the situation in this Baltic territory.

> I have heard from reliable witnesses that faction and disunion have arisen among you, because some of your preachers do not teach and act in accord, but each follows his own sense and judgment. . . . This causes confusion among the people. It prompts both the complaint, "No one knows what he should believe or with whom he should side," and the common demand for uniformity in doctrine and practice. (AE 53: 45–46)

As in *On the Freedom of the Christian*, Luther outlined the two spiritually perilous extremes to be avoided — ritualism and liturgical laissez-faire — in order to chart a middle course.

> I hope that you still hold pure and unblemished the teachings concerning faith, love, and cross-bearing and the principal articles of the knowledge of Christ. Then you will know how to keep your consciences clear before God. (AE 53: 46)

Provided that the distinction and connection between faith and love is clear, everything else would fall into place. This was Luther's hope, and this is why he, just as in 1520, introduced Christ's role as servant, based on Philippians 2, as the decisive paradigm for the Livonians, so that they too would become true worshipers, true servants of all.

Luther went on to exhort the preachers that they not seek personal glory, as Satan delights in this kind of self-centeredness. Applied to the issue at hand, Luther therefore admonished them.

> It is un-Christian to quarrel over such things and thereby to confuse the common people. We should consider the edification of the lay folk more important than our own ideas and opinions. Therefore, I pray all of you, my dear sirs, let each one surrender his own opinions and get together in a friendly way and come to a common decision about these external matters, so that there will be one uniform practice throughout your district instead of disorder — one thing being done here and another there — lest the common people get confused and discouraged. (AE 53: 47)

Quarreling over such things betrays a serious confusion of faith and love, of law and gospel. Luther explained this all-important point.

> Now when your people are confused and offended by your lack of uniform order, you cannot plead, "Externals are free. Here in my own place I am going to do as I please." But you are bound to consider the effect of your attitude on others. By faith be free in your conscience toward God, but by love be bound to serve your neighbor's edification, as also St. Paul says, Romans 14 [15:2], "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him." For we should not please ourselves, since Christ also pleased not himself, but us all. (AE 53: 47–48)

Luther's argument in *On the Freedom of the Christian* is applied here to a concrete conflict where some pastors enthusiastically mistook their freedom *coram deo* to be freedom *coram hominibus*, thereby damaging their congregations and the unity among congregations.[5] As based on Christ's example and the apostle's exhortation, Luther pointed out: Not so! Let faith be free toward God; let love serve the neighbor. Let therefore one preacher consider the confusion he is causing in his neighbors' congregations. The practical solution is, as suggested above, the

5. This application is less clear in a 1524 letter to Nicholas Hausmann, where Luther still thought a congregational volunteerism in liturgical matters could exist while "the unity of the Spirit [w]ould be preserved in faith and in the Word" (AE 49: 90–91). By the following year, when he had to write the letter at hand to the Livonians, Luther had come to realize that such volunteerism unbridled by love undermined the unity of the Spirit. This resulted in a more consistent application of the teachings on faith and love already set forth in *On the Freedom of the Christian* in a foundational way.

joint adoption of a common, edifying order of service by the pastors of the area. Remarkably, Luther considered this collegial *ministerium*-based practice to be the antidote to individual pastors' lording it over the church.

Here as always, Luther taught that the gospel does not abrogate but rather establishes the proper relation to law. The law, to be sure, cannot alter man's state before God, but it does order our external dealings with one another, even in the congregation. Significantly, Luther indicated that external, ceremonial uniformity does express and maintain the unity among Christians, which is by faith (AE 53: 48). After all, Satan is cunning enough to use even liturgical diversity to sow his seed of doctrinal disunity, given how heresies have emerged during the history of the church (AE 53: 46).

Let faith be free toward God; let love serve the neighbor.

Luther's same argument appears again in his 1526 *German Mass*. There is freedom, but this is the spiritual freedom of the gospel, which must not be confused with carnal license.

> While the exercise of this freedom is up to everyone's conscience and must not be cramped or forbidden, nevertheless, we must make sure that freedom shall be and remain a servant of love and of our fellow-man. . . . As far as possible we should observe the same rites and ceremonies, just as all Christians have the same baptism and the same sacrament [of the altar] and no one has received a special one of his own from God. (AE 53: 61)

Luther's "as far as possible" was qualified in an important way: those who already have sound orders of service need not adopt the one Luther here is publishing. It was not necessary that all of Germany have but one order. Yet this too was again qualified regionally.

> It would be well if the service in every principality would be held in the same manner and if the order observed in a given city would also be followed by the surrounding towns and villages; whether those in other principalities hold the same order or add to it ought to be a matter of free choice and not of constraint. (AE 53: 62)

The average churchgoer in the sixteenth century was less mobile than people today and would always be exposed to the same order of service. One can safely assume that this demographic fact was the background for Luther's concession for some regional liturgical diversity that, in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, did develop in the Lutheran territories of Europe. Each town and principality, in evangelical freedom, had its own orders of service, with significant similarities between them. Within these regional entities, however, there was liturgical uniformity as seen in the many regional church orders. While Luther wanted pastors to reach such uniformity,[6] in later years the prince, as *summus episcopus*, laid hold of the *jus liturgicum*.

Interestingly, Luther ends this order of service with an expiration date. This order he intended to be used only as long as it was serviceable for the promotion of faith and love. As soon as it failed to do so, it is "dead and gone" (AE 53: 90). Then a new order would have to be devised in a churchly fashion.

Luther knew that attending church could be superficial. Unlike Zwingli and the later Pietists, however, this did not lead Luther to declare outward ceremonies of the church to be useless. Instead, he called for a German catechism that was to help drive home proclamation in the divine service. He structured this catechism, based on the church's classic catechetical texts, according to faith and love. Catechetical preaching and hearing delivers and receives God's word as outlined under the categories of faith and love. Faith is subdivided into law and gospel: we believe we are sinners and we believe Christ to be our Savior based on God's word, as law and gospel. Love is subdivided into actively serving the neighbor according to God's holy will and passively enduring hardships sent by God's fatherly will (AE 53: 64–67).[7]

In his letter to the Livonians, Luther briefly commented on the ancient practice of having councils decide liturgical matters for their own regions or even for all Christendom. The problem was that "these rulings and canons became snares for the soul and pitfalls for the faith" (AE 53: 46; see also AE 49: 90). As seen above, due to the spiritual constitution even of the Christian, this danger is a constant one and ultimately cannot be eliminated in this life. God's grace is always needed for even the correct teaching to be understood properly. Indeed, Luther's advice to the Livonian pastors practically amounted to a conciliar or synodical way of establishing liturgical uniformity and order in one area.

He took these thoughts up again in 1539, in his writing *On Councils and the Church*. After enumerating the chief duties of a council, namely, the defense of the old, biblical faith and love in changing times, Luther wrote about order and tyranny.

> Tenth, a council has the power to institute some ceremonies, provided, first, that they do not strengthen the bishops' tyranny; second, that they are useful and profitable to

6. Not without good reason does Luther, in his letter to the Livonians, appeal to pastors to devise a joint liturgy. Since liturgies are proclamation of God's word in law and gospel, the incumbents of the public ministry are the *iure-divino* men to write public evangelical liturgies. See AC XXVIII, 53–56 and H. Lieberg, *Amt und Ordination bei Luther und Melanchthon* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 294–95, esp. n. 127.
7. See Peters, *Kommentar*, 1:33–38, where he discusses various reasons why Luther, despite this proposal, did not structure his catechisms according to "faith and love."

> the people and show fine, orderly discipline and conduct. Thus it is necessary, for example, to have certain days, and also places where one can assemble; also certain hours for preaching and for the public administration of the sacraments, for praying, singing, praising and thanking God, etc. — as St. Paul says, 1 Corinthians 14 [:40], "All things should be done decently and in order." Such items do not serve the bishops' tyranny, but only the people's need, profit, and order. In summary, these must and cannot be dispensed with if the church is to survive. (AE 41: 131)

While this duty is thus not among the first duties of a true council, Luther still considered it to be essential for the very survival of the church. In light of what has been seen above, this is certainly no overstatement. And while the Reformer allowed for Christian freedom (human regulations cannot be made binding on conscience), he also stated that a Christian would freely observe these godly ceremonies. Though not bound by any law, "he would want to do and would prefer to do more than such a law demands." A non-Christian, on the other hand, according to Luther, is the person "who haughtily, proudly, and wilfully despises it." His advice for dealing with such a faithless and thus loveless individual is to "let him go his way, for such a person will also despise a higher law, be it divine or human." Liturgical "laws," freely devised by the church, are thus training grounds to break sinful man's quest for autonomy and school the Christian in humble obedience in life toward man and God. This resonates well with everything Luther wrote on ceremonies some nineteen years earlier in his *On the Freedom of a Christian*.

Who should attend such a council, and how should it function concretely? Luther hints at an answer when he rhetorically asks (AE 41: 132), "How could one assemble a council if there were no pastors or bishops?" As Luther sees it, councils are emergency courts applying the law of Holy Scripture to the church (AE 41: 133). They spring into action only when local orthodox pastors and theological teachers, who are the regular judges in their congregations, are overwhelmed by a heresy. This is why Luther, in seeming contradiction to what has been said above, also says,

> Ceremonies ought to be completely disregarded by the councils and should be left at home in the parishes, indeed, in the schools so that the schoolmaster, along with the pastor, would be "master of ceremonies" (AE 41: 136–137).

It is the pastors and teachers, "the lowly but daily, permanent, eternal judges" (AE 41: 134), who deal with the young sinners who, like young trees, are still malleable, while the council, "being a great judge," deals only with the old and hardened sinners (AE 41: 134–135). In light of the above, this should not be used as an argument for liturgical parochialism but as an argument for liturgical reform and renewal from below, from the individual parishes up, as Luther's liturgical reform in the early sixteenth century clearly illustrates: it was started locally but not without loving concern for the church at large.

Luther's teaching on the liturgical duties of pastors and councils thus provides a more detailed version of what Luther hinted at in the Smalcald Articles. Luther writes there about evangelical church government,

> The church cannot be better ruled and preserved than if we all live under one head, Christ, and all the bishops — equal according to the office (though they may be unequal in their gifts) — keep diligently together in unity of teaching, faith, sacraments, prayers, and works of love, etc.

The church is thus preserved in truth and unity not only by agreement in the faith, but also by agreement in "prayers and works of love" (SA II, IV, 9).

CONFESSIONAL VERIFICATION

The sixteenth-century Confessions not written by Luther also faithfully follow his biblical lead in matters of liturgical uniformity and diversity. They also teach faith in the promise as the highest worship (AC XXVI, 3), and reject the notion that performing ceremonies is a meritorious work (AC XXVIII, 50–52). They value ceremonies according to their usefulness for teaching the faith and maintaining outward discipline and order, even concord (AC XXIV, 2–3; Ap XIV, 20 and 51) and they maintain that ceremonial uniformity is not necessary for church fellowship (AC VII, 2–3). Yet these other confessional writings assert, as emphatically as Luther, that unnecessary diversity and novelty — that is, change that is not warranted for the sound theological reasons enunciated by Luther — should be avoided as confusing "the inexperienced" (Ap XV, 51–52). It should be noted that the formula "faith and love" is not applied to the liturgical question in these writings.

As Luther sees it, councils are emergency courts applying the law of Holy Scripture to the church.

Article X of the Formula of Concord deserves special attention since it is time and again adduced to justify liturgical diversity in the church. First of all, we need to keep in mind the authorial intention of this confession. Its authors did not wish to teach anything that had not been taught in the Augsburg Confession, which they understood to be a summary of Luther's scripturally-based teachings (FC SD Preface, 4–5; RN 5). Sentences in the Confessions are not suspended in space. They have a context that goes even beyond the writings included in the 1580 Book of Concord. The Confessions thus contextualize themselves; we need not do that for them. Luther's and Melanchthon's teachings on liturgical matters in the context of the

distinction between faith and love, freedom and service, mean concretely that it would be surprising to find advocacy for liturgical congregationalism in the Formula of Concord.

In order to understand FC x properly, the question of what kind of ceremonies are in view has to be answered correctly. As FC SD x, 1 states, this article is about such as

> are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word but have been introduced into the church with good intentions for the sake of good order and decorum or to maintain Christian discipline.[8]

For good historical reasons (the Interim and the Adiaphoristic Controversy it sparked), *forbidden* is defined more carefully in these important respects.

> We must not include among the truly free adiaphora or indifferent matters ceremonies that give the appearance or (in order to avoid persecution) are designed to give the impression that our religion does not differ greatly from the papist religion or that their religion were not completely contrary to ours. Nor are such ceremonies matters of indifference when they are intended to create the illusion (or are demanded or accepted with that intention), as if such action brought the two contradictory religions into agreement and made them one body. (FC SD x, 5)

Appearances do matter, and ceremonies are important ecclesial and confessional markers,[9] not because they are necessary for church fellowship (they are not), but because, as Luther taught some fifty years prior to the Formula of Concord, they so well express the unanimity of faith among Christians. In other words, where there are differences in the faith, these ought to, and will, express themselves liturgically. This should caution against a practice that, based on human reasons, liturgically borrows from church bodies that are not united with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the confession of the gospel in all its articles (FC SD x, 31).

The Formula affirms that congregations have the authority to create liturgies and orders of worship.

> The community of God in every time and every place has the right, power, and authority to change, reduce, or expand such practices according to circumstances in an orderly and appropriate manner, without frivolity or offense, as seems most useful, beneficial, and best for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the building up of the church. (FC SD x, 9)

Every congregation of God has this liberty because all Christians by faith in Christ are free. So far, so good. Yet normally quotations stop here. But in light of Luther's exegetical foundations for liturgical love, the following sentence needs to be included.

> Paul teaches how one may yield and make concessions to the weak in the faith in such external matters of indifference with good conscience (Rom 14[:1–23]), and he demonstrates this with his own example (Acts 16[:3] and 21[:26]; 1 Cor. 9[:10]).

If these biblical references mean anything, they serve to give the entire paragraph a decidedly conservative slant. As seen in Luther, the weak are those clinging to rites that might seem outmoded to the strong in faith. The strong are thus called to forego their freedom without harm to their conscience and yield to the weak in love. But also the first part of this paragraph, in light of Luther and the earlier confessions, certainly will not help to support a liturgical everyone-for-himself attitude. Offense was given, disorder was created, when congregations and pastors moved unilaterally, without theological consultation, without seeking uniformity with their sister congregations. Unilateral change within one area certainly would have caused offense because it would have been seen as disruptive of the bond of peace and love, especially if "useful" came to be seen more in the illusionary and convenient sense rejected in paragraph five. Usefulness, again, is to be measured by how well a given innovation teaches the unchanging faith and fosters unity and good order in the church. To be justified, it should achieve the goals of church orders better than what was there before the change took place. There is no reason to doubt that the authors of the Formula of Concord had the conciliar-synodical practice of Luther (and Melanchthon), or variations thereof, in mind, when it came to how liturgies should be changed "in an orderly and appropriate manner."

SOME APPLICATIONS

Some present-day applications are in order. Decisions concerning worship practices in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) are made by the synodical convention. This is good Lutheran practice. Reviewing recent synodical resolutions (1998, 2001, and 2004) concerning worship in light of Luther and the Confessions yields interesting results. Resolution 2-10 (1998)[10] starts with an impressive preamble that in a few paragraphs comes close to summarizing what we have unfolded here in greater detail.

8. According to Luther's reconstruction of the history of the mass alluded to above, adiaphora included everything except the words of institution and the distribution of the consecrated elements. Only when we see how vast he considered his freedom to be, can we begin to fathom how great the loving constraint was that he imposed upon himself for his own body's sake and for the sake of the needy neighbor.
9. Walther, in his *Pastoral Theology*, designates some ceremonies as "confessional ceremonies" (*Bekenntnißceremonien*)—*Americanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, 3rd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1885), 56–57.
10. See http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/2004%20Convention/1998conventionproceedings.pdf (accessed 10 October 2006).

Articles VI and III of the LCMS Constitution are referred to as being reflective of "the balanced approach of our confessional understanding." On the one hand, they stipulate as a condition for congregational membership the exclusive use of doctrinally pure hymnbooks and agendas. On the other hand, they encourage congregations to "develop an appreciation of a variety of responsible practices and customs that are in harmony with our common profession of faith," while at the same time striving for uniformity in ceremonies. It seems that two contrary movements are brought into one sentence: one movement is centripetal (uniformity); the other is centrifugal (variety). Both goals, it appears, may best be accomplished in practical terms by having some congregations explore the variety side of the equation, while others focus more on striving for uniformity. It is difficult to see how this squares with Luther's, the Confessions', and the early Missourians' constant urging of uniformity; they did not feel the need to encourage diversity because that was what they encountered as given, what they strove to push back.[11]

There are numerous Resolved developed out of this preamble, and many of these are good and fair. Yet it is perhaps telling that the one Resolved referring to the above-mentioned conditions for membership omits the word *exclusive,* so that it now can be read to mean simply that member congregation also use (among other materials) doctrinally pure resources, such as hymnals. Without this *particula exclusiva*, however, the sentence is basically meaningless, just as a doctrine of justification without the pertinent *particulae exclusivae* would be meaningless.

This then sets the stage for the Resolved in which the Commission on Worship is charged to prepare a guide that gives every congregation permission to evaluate worship resources such as hymns from non-LCMS sources (in an earlier Resolved the same commission had been charged to assemble people to work toward consensus). This makes the condition for membership concerning the *exclusive* use of doctrinally pure hymnbooks and agenda fully obsolete. This permits everyone to be his own doctrinal supervisor and to pick and choose from whatever source that seems good to him. Congregations now merely need a "goal of using doctrinally pure worship materials." Sound worship materials simply are not the same as sound hymnbooks.[12] Goals more often than not are missed. Walking together in faith and love is not necessary anymore. Adding a fine Luther quote in the last Resolved concerning giving up one's own opinions then appears to be no more than window dressing. The centrifugal forces have won despite the good preamble.

At the 2001 LCMS convention, one sees in the title of Resolution 2-05A,[13] "To Continue to Foster Discussion on Worship," that the expectations are lower than in 1998 when the goal was still "To Build Consensus on Worship." If we cannot reach a consensus, then we can at least continue to foster talking about worship. Accordingly, the preamble, while noting a clear "desire to work toward a consensus," still acknowledges a *dissensus* on a number of crucial issues. It summarizes the good preamble of the 1998 resolution by stating that, while the Confessions reject "rigid uniformity in all rites and ceremonies," they do teach that "rites and ceremonies" are useful. Whether these need to be uniform or common rites and ceremonies this summary does not say.

The following sentence merits attention: "While unity of faith is not dependent on a uniformity of practice, it is greatly strengthened when there is broad agreement concerning both our theology and practice of worship." It seems that there is a difference between "uniformity of practice" and "broad agreement concerning both our theology and practice of worship," especially when the latter is made a matter of indifference for the unity of faith (it merely strengthens it). The Livonian pastors rebuked by Luther might have had a broad agreement concerning their worship life, but people were still angered and confused by its practical diversity. In keeping with the preamble, one of the Resolved clauses now charges various officers and synodical institutions with "building greater understanding of our theology of worship and fostering further discussion of worship practices that are consistent with this theology."

This is the move from uniformity to theological consistence where the only stipulation reminiscent of love's call to uniformity is that individual parishes do their own liturgical thing circumspectly. Now a great number of diverse worship practices employed by groups with diverse viewpoints is possible, even desirable, so long as they are consistent with Lutheran theology. Now there is no striving for uniformity anymore. It seems the authors of this resolution finally realized that Article III of the LCMS Constitution tries to put a square peg in a round hole. Obviously, no one denies that there is more than one theologically sound Lutheran liturgy, just as there is more than one way of explaining the chief parts of the catechism. Yet what is actually the theological rationale for throwing overboard the historic Lutheran insistence on love's concrete form: liturgical

11. The 1854 Constitution of the Missouri Synod reads in Ch. IV ("Business of Synod"), A. 5: "Striving for the greatest possible uniformity in ceremonies" (see C. S. Meyer, ed., *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1964], 151). Interestingly, here the responsibility for said uniformity rests with the synod at large. When "striving for greatest possible uniformity" is delegated to the individual congregations by the current Constitution (Art. III, 7), albeit with the encouragement of synod, then this signals a change in the understanding of what synod is all about and how congregations relate to it. This change seems to move toward congregationalization. A more elaborate statement of "old Missouri's" appreciation for ceremonial uniformity is found in Th. Engelder et al., *Popular Symbolics: The Doctrines of the Churches of Christendom and of Other Religious Bodies Examined in the Light of Scripture* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1934), 20–21.

12. To understand the difference between pure *books* and disjointed pure *materials*, see Walther, *Pastoraltheologie*, 57 (my own translation): "The preacher, who nonchalantly looks on and lets his congregation sing out of hymnals and lets its children be taught out of schoolbooks that contain the soul poison of false doctrine, undoubtedly is not one who cares for souls, but one who kills them."

13. See http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/2004%20Convention/2001convproceedings.pdf (accessed 10 October 2006).

uniformity? Is it the churchly thing to do to give diverse congregations simply the tools to develop for themselves the worship practices that work for them? Is loving concern for the spiritual well-being of the brother and sister replaced by an affirmation of the individual's autonomy and responsibility?

The title of the 2004 convention's Resolution 2-04[14] is telling: "To Affirm Responsible Use of Freedom in Worship." It seems that we have arrived at a "consensus" or at least a "broad agreement" concerning worship practices. And that agreement is to use freedom in worship, but to use it responsibly. Here again the seat of responsibility is not the church collectively and jointly but the individual congregation. Not surprisingly, only Article III of the Constitution is referenced in the interpretation of which the centrifugal forces have already won the day. Article VI is left out completely.

Acknowledging "diverse viewpoints in [the Missouri] Synod concerning what is appropriate and salutary in corporate worship," the first Resolved affirms "respect for diversity in worship practices as we build greater understanding of our theology of worship and foster further discussion of worship practices that are consistent with that theology." This sounds like a truce between the poles of traditional and contemporary worship forms; but perhaps the LCMS is merely looking for the time to formulate a theology of worship that is broad enough to reconcile its diverse worship practices. In the last Resolved, the Commission on Worship is charged to "initiate a process leading toward the development of diverse worship resources for use in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod."

This process began in February 2006, when a committee nominated by the Commission on Worship was formed, which was to develop these "diverse worship resources." According to a March 2006 *Reporter* article, the committee, according to one member, is

> leaning toward providing some kind of annotated, doctrinally sound resource list—Web-based, rather than hard-copy. We're exploring elements including hymns and songs, visual and sound enhancements like projectors and electronic devices, drama, dance—you name it.[15]

CONCLUSION

"You name it" is the last word of the LCMS so far on the question of freedom and love in matters liturgical. "You are not free to use this liberty" was Luther's stern admonition to the creative Livonian pastors who threatened the survival of the congregations in their area. One year later he added: "Freedom shall be and remain a servant of love." Luther was certainly a champion of the freedom of the gospel, but at the same time he denied the "logical" confusion of faith and love. Christian freedom is exercised *coram deo*, not *coram hominibus*. Ceremonies fall into the general rubric of love and law; and as every law, they also have a coercive character in relation to the sinful, youthful self of the old Adam. Luther had a keen understanding of the power of sin even in the Christian. This power needed to be tied down by all the means God had put at the church's disposal if something good was to come about. Thus Luther was not a liturgical antinomian, one who taught that because the law and ceremonies are not necessary for salvation they need not be of great concern to the Christian. Luther also had a keen understanding of the tender bond of love between Christians within a congregation and between congregations. This again led him to teach in a painfully specific way that our love for the fellow believer also consists in following a common form of liturgy that, to be sure, will change from time to time and from area to area, but that still is to be a means by which Christians render an important service to his neighbor, be he weak, young, or new to the faith. In this, he appreciated sturdy liturgical forms as a priceless school for selfless service in one's daily vocations and, besides being confessional markers, as a bulwark against the tricks of the devil.

Luther's was a collective understanding of the church. It is not some organizational umbrella permitting anyone to do his own thing, but doctrinally united churches jointly moving along in love. This he saw as humble pastoral service and stewardship, quite the opposite of individual pastors or worship committees lording it over Christ's free bride, one congregation at a time. While this understanding characterizes the Confessions and the early Missouri Synod, this cannot be said anymore of the present-day LCMS. Freedom now is increasingly not our freedom *coram deo*, but our freedom *coram hominibus*, that is, our liberty to do things as they suit us best, with little or no concern for the neighbor who might be offended by our exercise of liberty or who might at least not be truly served thereby. Faith and love are thus confused. Correspondingly, the concern regarding opening the gates for false, faith-destroying doctrine by encouraging liturgical diversity is paling, as well as any understanding of ceremonies as common public confessions of the faith. In other words, it seems that a political understanding of liberty unchecked by love has found its way into God's church and is dominating the discussions in which countless leaders or groups wrangle for their rights and privileges. Given these circumstances, unity will have to be expressed more and more by the versatile tools corporate marketing offers, not by churchly means such as a uniform liturgy.

Liturgies born of this spirit are not true liturgies anymore, even if some of the old words and forms are embedded in them. Lacking uniformity as an essential feature, in principle they are inconsistent with the theology of worship taught by Luther and the Confessions. Far from being places of Christlike self-denial, submission, and service, they have become vehicles of self-affirmation. Ceremonies and the law are being abused by sinful man once again. We experience here the truth that only God's grace keeps his church with Jesus Christ in the true understanding of his word and worship. For this grace we pray also in this generation. LOGIA

14. See http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/2004%20Convention/DCS.pdf (accessed 10 October 2006).
15. See http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=9771 (accessed 10 October 2006).

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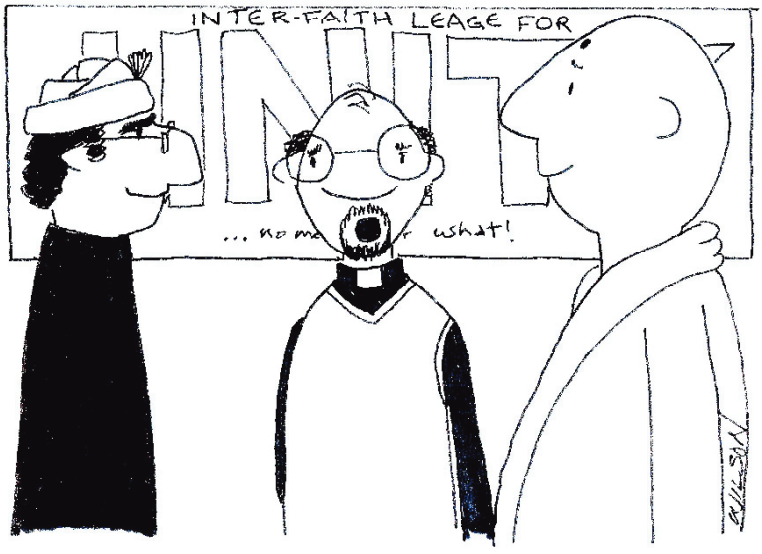

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Review Essay

Lutheran Service Book: Pastoral Care Companion. Prepared by the Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007.

I once heard an aged pastor say, "The Lord knows what our butts look like more than our faces, because we spend so much time running away from him." This is especially true of those who are hurting, troubled, or stuck in some kind of sin. The fact is, people who most urgently need care are often times the very ones who are likely to wander away from the Good Shepherd and the safety of his flock. Thankfully, we have a Savior who passionately pursues those who run from him, a Shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine to seek out and save the one who is lost. Thus, those who are called and ordained to oversee the flock and to provide the pastoral care of Christ to the congregation tend not only to those who faithfully gather for the divine service, but also seek out the many who are unable or unwilling to do so. Since so much pastoral care is given outside the divine service, the Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod published the *Pastoral Care Companion* (*PCC*) to assist pastors as they visit their flock.

Rumors of the high quality of this resource were circulating well before it was published; at the same time, it was rumored to be over seven-hundred pages in length. I imagined having to carry around a book dwarfed only by the *Lutheran Service Book Altar Book*. I was not amused at the thought. In this case, size matters, as portability is paramount; so I was pleasantly surprised when I received a copy and found it to be entirely pocket-sized. The *PCC* conveniently fits into my pants or coat pocket. I still can't figure out how they did it. And having read through it and put it to use the past several months, I found that the rumors of the quality of the book were right on target. Its usefulness has exceeded even my rather lofty expectations.

Introduction(s)

The *Pastoral Care Companion* includes both the introduction to the *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, as well as an introduction to the *PCC* proper. While introductions are frequently overlooked, I found these to be a very worthwhile read. They serve as a primer on pastoral theology. What I found especially valuable in the introductions is the reminder that pastoral care is ultimately AC v work. It is, in the end, about bringing the gospel to bear on sinners that faith might be created, strengthened, or renewed. While many other kinds of help might be offered by the pastor, the central goal of pastoral care is that the gospel has its way with the sinner. So these introductions are quite fitting, as the remaining content of the *PCC* is intended to help equip the pastor for that unique and blessed task.

Pastor's Prayers of Preparation

Appropriately, the first section of the *PCC* contains prayers for pastors as they prepare for their work. If we are not driven to our knees as we go out to care for the flock, then we neither understand the danger the flock is in nor our own impotence in dealing with it. We are God's coworkers. Faithful pastoral care is the care of our Lord Jesus Christ given through the fulfillment of our vocational duties. With this in mind, prayers are provided for all kinds of situations — both general prayers and prayers for specific pastoral acts — that we might commend our anxieties to the Lord and call on his mercy to accompany us. Emboldened by his promises, we press on, trusting him to work through us and so to make our work fruitful. First things first. *Ora et labora*.

Services and Rites

The *PCC* includes a section containing eighteen services and rites taken from the *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*. The rites chosen are all "traveling rites," that is, the rites and services that the pastor might use outside of the nave and chancel. This was a wise inclusion, as it allows the pastor not to have to carry both the *PCC* and the *Agenda* as visitations are made.

Resources for Pastoral Care

I have been a pastor for twenty years and yet continue to feel ill-prepared to answer the many and varied calls I receive for pastoral care. The evil that people commit and suffer often leaves me overwhelmed and dumbfounded. How am I to tend to these people in their need? What do I say to them? What am I to pray? Truth be told, my heart still skips a beat every time the telephone rings, for fear of what trouble I might be called to attend.

For this reason I am especially thankful for what is a nearly five-hundred-page section of the *PCC* entitled "Resources for Pastoral Care." This is not only the heart of the book, but is what makes it the valuable resource it is.

The Commission on Worship tapped experienced pastors and chaplains to compile the resources included in this section, in order to equip the pastor to care for individuals in sixty different situations. These situations are categorized under the following eight headings, for easy reference: At the Time of Birth, Ministering to the Sick, At the Time of Death, Times of Spiritual Distress, Home and Family, Vocation, Times of Celebration, and Miscellaneous Situations. Not every conceivable situation is treated, but it is difficult to imagine any pastoral call that would not be aided by the materials provided in this section.

Each of the sixty situations addressed contains

- An introductory paragraph, which helps the pastor think through the situation and how he might speak the law and the gospel to the person affected.
- Several psalms, which can be prayed with or for the individual receiving care.
- Several appropriate readings from the Old and New Testaments, which, along with the psalms, have thematic headings for easy reference.
- Collects, which can be used verbatim or to give shape to the pastor's *ex corde* prayers.
- Hymn stanzas, that the pastor might bring the church's familiar song to the individual as he suffers or rejoices.

I have made use of these resources innumerable times in a wide variety of situations the last several months, including comforting a local psychologist who was grieving the loss of his nephew to suicide, tending to parishioners who had thoughts of and attempts at suicide, calling on those who were weighed down with the guilt of adulterous activities, dealing with the lonely and isolated, consoling the mentally ill, helping those suffering vocational difficulties, and providing care for those imprisoned and their families. In each instance I found the resources provided in this section to be insightful, instructive, and most helpful in giving the guidance and tools I needed for the diagnostic and healing work fundamental to good pastoral care. Hardly a day goes by that I do not consult this section, even if only for my own private meditation and consolation. To say that I have found it invaluable is no exaggeration.

Other Resources

Additional resources provided by the *Pastoral Care Companion* include

- Collects of the Day and Readings. Included are collects and readings for both the one-year and three-year lectionaries. This is especially helpful for the pastor as he attempts to connect the pastoral care in his visitations to the fellowship of the church and the divine service, using the texts and themes drawn from the gathered congregation.
- Prayers, Intercessions, and Thanksgivings. Included are over one hundred and twenty prayers that have been drawn from the *Lutheran Service Book Altar Book*.
- Hymns and Liturgical Texts in German and Spanish. This includes, among other things, hymns, the Apostles' Creed, the Our Father, and the Verba.
- Preparation for Confession. Here is a series of diagnostic questions based on the Ten Commandments, which are useful for the pastor as he prepares for private confession and absolution or as he prepares penitents for the same. Originally, this self-examination tool was to be included in the *Lutheran Service Book*. Unfortunately, it was omitted. I am thankful for its inclusion in the PCC. Reading through the questions provided is not for the faint of heart. They are quite penetrating.
- Guidelines for Pastoral Examination of Catechumens. These guidelines provide an outline for the pastor to use as he attempts to prepare and examine candidates for first Communion or confirmation. They are based largely on the Small Catechism's "Christian Questions with Their Answers." Additionally, these guidelines give direction to the pastor to include private confession and absolution as he prepares catechumens for first Communion, in keeping with the practice articulated by the confessors in AC xxv: "For the custom has been retained among us of not administering the sacrament to those who have not previously been examined and absolved."

Singing the Psalms

Several single tones and double tones are provided here for the chanting of psalmody. The pastor may choose which tone is most fitting to the theme of the text.

Indices

Several indices are included for easy reference, though an index for hymn stanzas is noticeably absent.

If it sounds like I am gushing as I write this review, well, I am. I love the *Pastoral Care Companion*. It already has gained a place alongside my hymnal and Bible as one of my three most highly treasured and often used books. I think this is the most needful and important resource the Commission on Worship has had published. My only complaint is that I served twenty years in the ministry without it. Having carefully read through and used the *PCC* for several months, I have learned just how poor my pastoral care has been and how much better it can become. I cannot imagine a pastor whose work would not be aided in significant ways by this resource. I heartily recommend this unique resource to any and every pastor who has been given the call to visit and care for the Lord's flock.

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Principles of Lutheran Theology. By Carl E. Braaten. Second Edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2007.

A great deal has happened since Carl Braaten published his first edition of the *Principles of Lutheran Theology* in 1983. Not only has the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) materialized after a string of mergers, but the visible Lutheran Church has in general become increasingly polarized as the last vestiges of confessionalism have been stamped out in many quarters. In large measure therefore, the *Principles* comes out of an era that led to the current situation of the Lutheran Church in America. It is for this reason that the work even in this revised edition embodies many of the trends that led to the present state of affairs.

In turning to the book itself we discover a relatively straightforward organization. Each chapter represents a particular "Principle" of what Braaten considers to be essential to the project of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The major difficulty with the way in which Braaten construes many of these principles is twofold. The first problem is the question of how our author defines "Lutheranism" or "Lutheran Theology." The second difficulty is the fact that what Braaten refers to as the "Principles of Lutheran Theology" is frequently not particularly Lutheran in the sense of the classical tradition, but rather a variation of the general opinion of post-Barthian continental Protestant theology.

In touching on the first question, the status of the Lutheran Confessions in the definition of Lutheranism is ambiguous at best for Braaten. This is strange indeed since, even from a purely historical perspective, it must be admitted that Lutheranism has been a confessional movement from its very beginning. Braaten for his part seems in a small measure to recognize this, but rarely makes references to the theology of the Confessions. His own position on the subject of the status of the Confessions is what he refers to as "constructive confessional Lutheranism" (39). It is difficult to know what this means in that Braaten speaks in somewhat vague terms of coming out of the confessional ghetto and reentering the catholic mainstream while maintaining continuity with the content of the Confessions. The background of this is Braaten's own leadership along with Robert W. Jenson within the so-called Evangelical Catholic movement within the ELCA. The theology that comes out of these circles tends to view individual Christian confessions as not necessarily conflicting with one another or making exclusive truth claims, but rather representing conflicting theological concerns. From this follows a desire to construct "ecumenical" theologies that combine many bits and pieces of seemingly conflicting traditions.

The prime example of this is Jenson's own systematic theology that possesses a Lutheran Christology; a Roman Catholic understanding of church, Scripture and sacraments; and various injections from Reformed thinkers (Jonathan Edwards, Karl Barth, and so forth). This procedure does not ultimately work, since as is self-evident to most Christians and neutral observers alike, various Christian confessions do conflict with one another in some rather irreconcilable ways (for example, Jenson must eventually decide for Lutheran Christology over Reformed!). This comes out strongly in the chapter on the "Ecumenical Principle," where Braaten insists that although the Lutheran Church possesses the gospel, Roman Catholicism possesses the right structures of ministry suited to promote the gospel (70–72). Similarly, Braaten believes that the Roman idea of mass as propitiatory sacrifice and the Lutheran idea of the Lord's Supper as a "testament" do not conflict but rather complement one another (124). This is a puzzling remark in that as Luther himself demonstrates in the Schmalkald Articles, it is precisely ministry as understood by the Roman Church that conflicts with the gospel. The papal office, observes Luther, is the natural corollary of the sacrifice of the mass. The latter is a work not commanded by God that is supposed to merit salvation, whereas the former is an office not established by God that exists to prescribe self-invented works that are supposedly meritorious of salvation. The two are mutually legitimating and in the same measure totally antithetical to the nature of the gospel. If this is indeed the theology of the Confessions, what "constructive continuity" does Braaten ultimately stand for? Indeed, leaving behind the theology of the Confessions, Braaten makes us wonder about which Lutheran theology he is expounding.

The second aspect of Braaten's abandonment of the confessional heritage of the Lutheran Church is that his "Principles" are ultimately not particularly Lutheran but more often than not based on trends in continental Protestantism since Barth. Particularly vexing is Braaten's ignorance or willful suppression of the logic of classical confessional Lutheran dogmatics. For example, his treatment of the doctrine of Scripture echoes most of Barth's and Brunner's criticisms of the identification of the Bible with the word of God (14–15). Any direct identification between the two would amount to "bibliolatry." In this, Braaten seems unaware that the rejection of such an understanding presupposes the desire of the Reformed tradition to distance God from the means of grace, notably Barth's rejection of the Lutheran doctrine of the inherent power of Scripture in *Church Dogmatics* I/1. Similarly, in his treatment of the theology of the cross, we discover more or less the false account of Luther's teaching that comes out of most contemporary Protestant treatments (particularly, Moltmann, Jenson, and Jüngel). Braaten insists that what Luther's theology of the cross demonstrates is that God suffers and for this reason is not immutable.

In fact this is the very opposite of what Luther claims. God for Luther is hidden *sub contrario* in the crucified Jesus. He in fact really is immutable. The point is that suffering and weakness conceal his eternal being, which is only accessible to faith. This hiddenness humbles us, draws us out of ourselves and thereby makes us people of faith. What Braaten assumes here—as do all the followers of Barth—is that God's being is somehow transparent in Jesus. Jesus' sufferings are an analogical representation of God's being "hidden in his majesty" or are a means whereby God temporally actualizes his being, wherein it also becomes transparent (what Gerhard Forde would refer to as a "negative theology of glory"). Braaten has therefore completely missed the point of the theology of the cross. In fact, what he

describes is the theology of glory, in which humans "see" God's eternal being and correspond to it. These are just two examples of Braaten's use of themes in contemporary continental Protestant dogmatics. Ultimately, they reveal a theologian not particularly in touch with the structure and logic of his own theological tradition.

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Singing the Ethos of God: On the Place of Christian Ethics in Scripture. By Brian Brock. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007.

At the University of Aberdeen, Brian Brock helps head up the School of Practical Theology, an institution that strives to answer questions in pastoral theology focused on practice with an understanding of faith as a lived entity in daily life. Brock's beginnings in theology sprang from his background in sciences. He received his BA in science (Colorado Christian University) and his first MA in biomedical and clinical ethics (Loma Linda University) in the context of modern medical practice.

Brock's doctoral work (King's College, London) focused on the relevance of the Christian faith in the ethics of technological development, especially in the arena of new genetics. He spent a brief time as a visiting scholar in the theological faculty of the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nurnberg, where he studied the role of the Bible in Christian ethics. In this project, he contrasted contemporary use of the Bible in Christian ethics with Augustine's and Luther's practices of ethics in their expositions on the Psalms. The fruits of these labors yielded Brian Brock's first book, *Singing the Ethos of God: On the Place of Christian Ethics in Scripture*. Helpful to the reader is the book's layout. Early chapters end with "questions for further study" and all chapters have a concluding summary.

Beside Augustine and Luther, Brock also notes some of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theological emphases. Bonhoeffer's *Psalms: The Prayerbook of the Bible* was one of his final writings and served as a suitable cap to his works on Christian ethics and life.

> At the end of his life Bonhoeffer could write, "I read the Psalms every day, as I have done for years; I know them and love them more than any other book," and that he chose Psalm 103 as the text for his wedding sermon. One easily misreads some of the central moves in his ethical writings without understanding how his love of the Psalms and his daily meditation on them shaped his mature method in Christian ethics. (74)

Bonhoeffer's theology was not systematized in separation of exegesis and ethics; rather, true Christian ethics flow from frequent rumination on God's word. "Bonhoeffer's aim is to discover how verbal meditation on Scripture facilitates the embodiment of faith" (77).

The root of the Christian ethos stems from God's word rather than self and the human heart, which forms an antimatrix:

> The genesis of idolatry in the inward-facing human heart . . . puts on an outer face of self-justification that creates social momentum. Idolatry is a gangrene that destroys by projecting itself outward through teaching into the social matrix. This yields a polarity between a self-worshipping church that has only a semblance of truth, God, and liturgy (thus becoming a servant of the devil, who appears as an angel of light [2 Cor 11:14]), and the church that "desires a beneficial way, in a sense a more secure way, a holier foundation, or to be called God's church." (182)

Compare the ethos from the selfish human heart antimatrix with an ethic that puts the self last in favor of the neighbor, an ethos formed in God's word: the living matrix of Psalm 119. "Those who pray this psalm [119] fully surrender their own destiny to the destiny of God's word. They see their relationship to God as nothing else than a relationship to his word" (Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 39).

The relationship of God's word to the Christian is formed in prayer, not our thoughts and hearts. "The richness of the Word of God ought to determine our prayer, not the poverty of our heart" (Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: the Prayer Book of the Bible*, 15), and in so doing

> . . . the righteous must not forget that the Psalms are prayers. . . . The Psalter positions us not before men but before God, as serving as "a kind of school and exercise for the disposition of the heart." Thus faith sings the psalms in vain if it is not actively engaged in its singing of the Psalter, an engagement that creates a visceral repudiation of the council of the ungodly — which resides in us. (196)

The prayer of the church found in the Psalms does not remain inward and closed in on itself; rather, service and concern for the neighbor flourish. "Such a prayer cannot but be a prayer for the church as a whole also to despise the council of the ungodly, and to prosper with the fruit of good deeds and the leaves of right teaching" (196). The tree of the church is the very life of the world, providing both spiritual and physical food and the cooling shade of compassion and forgiveness.

Prayer in the Psalter is the root of Christian ethics.

> Doxology is the point where the lost meet God, suggests Luther, because doxology cries for and dares to enter God's presence. The Psalms are God's way of opening doxology to us, thus, they play a crucial role in Christian ethics: They are God's offer of himself to us (167).

The sinner dead in trespasses and now resurrected to life in Christ, lives a life in Christ toward neighbor out of thankfulness. The church lives a life hidden with Christ in God.

The church collectively is God's tent in time, and Christ

> is the priest who takes us into the holy of holies of God's being. In the words of [Psalm 27] verse 5: "He will conceal me under the cover of his tent." This was so that others of Christ's members, by believing in him, might be the tabernacle and he its inner recesses. As the Apostle says, 'You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.'" (160)

The Christian life is one hidden in Christ. Prayer, especially the Lord's Prayer, forms Christians to be little Christs.

> [God] communicates his own idiom to us in Christ. In the "happy exchange" of justification, Christ not only takes our place, as is so often emphasized, but we take Christ's place before the Father. This is why Jesus teaches us his prayer: these are Jesus' own words to the Father. Therefore, to pray as Jesus is to come to know the Father as Jesus knows the Father and to thus embody the life of Christ. (254–55)

The Lord rightly prays "forgive us our trespasses" as he has taken them upon himself. The Christian is now given access rightly to call God "Our Father" because of Jesus' atoning work, and is free to live a life in thankfulness toward neighbor.

Prayer forms the Christian life. Psalm 130 reminds the Christian to wait on the Lord, and this waiting puts life in perspective.

> Psalm 130 has led us into deeper reflection on the role of prayer in the Christian life. This has yielded the discovery that prayer is an ethos. To live as one "waiting for the Lord" is fundamentally and sweepingly different from all other forms of life. Praying contextualizes the whole of the Christian life in each of its moments, thus framing all choices about action. In this sense prayer is not a "practice" but a *Lebensraum*, a space within which we can live. (301)

In prayer, it is the Lord who determines and executes the Christian's actions.

A Christian ethic is not a self-wrought morality apart from Christ that builds upon one's renewed life. As a Christian continues hidden and safeguarded in Christ, the Lord continues to serve the neighbor through the Christian.

> The action of love for neighbor, Augustine is arguing, is not the application of the moral rule in order to reach what is hoped for eternal life. It is, rather, a rational response of appreciation for God's love for us as a Good Samaritan (Luke 10). We love our neighbor because God has been a good neighbor to us. (136)

The ethic started with self apart from Christ often will fall into one of two ditches. First, one of pride and arrogance where good works may even earn greater favor with God. Next, an ethic like that stated above could lead to despair and utter hopelessness.

> Because and only because, Jesus was lifted up from among his persecutors, and because and only because 'for your sakes he became poor so that by his poverty you might become rich' (2 Cor 8:9), are we able to find meaning in being severed from our self-reliance and self-knowledge. Otherwise, it would be self-mutilation (120).

Hope springs alive in the Christian ethic, for in dying for neighbor we live to Christ who died for us.

> It is important to emphasize that Luther, unlike the caricature that has arisen in strands of the Lutheran tradition, is not espousing quietism or easy grace; rather, he makes the opposite claim — that Christians really are made new. He has already made this claim as strong as possible by saying that God maintains a real church of living saints. (226)

Living saints are the masks of God in vocations serving neighbor in the vibrancy of forgiveness.

Brock's *Singing the Ethos of God* would be of tremendous benefit for pastors looking for insight into the use of Psalms for spiritual care. A formidable study for pastoral circuit meetings could be a look into selected Psalms commented upon by Luther and Augustine supplemented with Brock's book. Any new study of Luther's and Augustine's commentaries on the Psalms and their practical applications would be at a loss if not consulting Brian Brock's *Singing the Ethos of God*.

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Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification. By Tuomo Mannermaa. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

Christ Present in Faith represents the second of two recent publications designed to familiarize English-speaking audiences with the Finnish school of Luther research. In this work, Dr. Tuomo Mannermaa presents a far more consistent and methodologically sound argument than in his contribution to the earlier work *Union with Christ*. Instead of piecing together widely chronologically divergent citations from Luther's works as before, our author makes the wise decision of limiting himself to a description of justification taken from Luther's lecture on Galatians of 1531. Closely following the argument of this work, Mannermaa gives readers a fine example of how the Finnish school interprets Luther's doctrine of justification by faith.

That being said, the work itself comes to several fairly questionable conclusions concerning Luther's view of justification. Mannermaa begins the work by claiming that Luther's view of justification has been continuously distorted over the centuries, beginning with the Formula of Concord. In particular, the Formula of Concord, due to its strong reaction against Osiander, repressed Luther's true teaching by insisting that forensic justification precedes mystical union with Christ. According to Mannermaa, Luther's true teaching was in fact that mystical

union was identical with justification. In fact Luther's teaching (according to our author) was actually the opposite of the Formula of Concord in that imputation is only necessary to make up for the subsequent sinfulness of the human being after mystical union. Challenging earlier readings of Luther on this point, Mannermaa's intention is to create a point of contact between Eastern Orthodoxy's doctrine of *theosis* and the Lutheran doctrine of justification.

In reading through these early chapters, the reader is often given the impression that he is witness to something of a theological game of slight of hand. It is interesting to note that in discussing Luther's understanding of justification, one thing that Mannermaa tends to downplay is the Reformer's understanding of the word of God as promise. On the few occasions that Mannermaa discusses Luther's theology of proclamation, he mentions that union of Christ with the believer occurs through the preaching of the word of promise. There is also a fairly lengthy discussion of the second use of the law. Still, Mannermaa never gives us any real details as to what the word of the gospel is or its relation to justification. Such an omission constitutes a profound lacuna in Mannermaa's argument and distorts his general understanding of Luther's position. If, as Luther often said, God's external promise of forgiveness preexists and creates faith, how then is it logical to say that imputation does not precede mystical union? In other words, since the word of promise itself announces God's prior decision of imputation and forgiveness, the claim that in Luther's thought mystical union precedes imputation would appear to be inaccurate. If indeed Mannermaa is correct, should we not expect the gospel for Luther to constitute a promise of forgiveness and imputation subsequent to mystical union? Mannermaa's slight of hand therefore becomes visible. Though he is well equipped to demonstrate that Luther uses the language of mystical union (and even deification!) he never really demonstrates that the union itself is not the result of a prior divine act of imputation.

As the work progresses, Mannermaa's pattern of very strained readings of texts continues and expands to a variety of subjects. On pages 58–61, Mannermaa tries to temper the Lutheran *simul justus et peccator* by clearing space for a *partim-partim* formula. To Mannermaa's credit, he eventually admits that from the standpoint of the imputed righteousness of Christ, the traditional *totus-totus* formula is still a correct way of construing Luther's view of the believer's relationship to God. Nevertheless, he claims that from the standpoint of sanctification the formula of *partim-partim* is valid. Since as a result of conversion the domination of sin is taken away from the believer, the believer can be described as partially saint, partially sinner. Here one might possibly detect the beginnings of an attempt to approximate the Tridentine doctrine of justification with its emphasis on the real improvement of the sinner through the infused habits of created grace. In fact Mannermaa argues that the sinner improves because the mystical union "forms" virtues of faith, hope, and love in the human subject. Nevertheless, Mannermaa's argument on this point again fails due to his own earlier admission on pages 52–54 that the total being of the Christian is always "flesh" and therefore all good works are simply the result of the Holy Spirit's agency within the believer. If this is the case, then even from the standpoint of sanctification, Luther did not view the believer as partially righteous, even if we do admit the use of some *partim-partim* language in Luther's description of regeneration. To posit a real improvement in the very being of the Christian would necessitate the construction of a doctrine of created grace, which Luther clearly rejects.

In the end, what seems most to mar Mannermaa's attempt at discovering a point of contact is the fact that Luther's use of the concept of mystical union is utterly different than that of historic Eastern Orthodoxy. As Mannermaa himself points out, Luther's use of the concept of union is strongly tied to the understanding of salvation as an exchange of realities. In the "happy exchange" Christ exchanges his righteousness for the believer's sin. In accepting the believer's sin, Christ himself destroys the old being as determined by sin, death, the devil, and the law through his death on the cross. In this sense, the Galatians commentary's use of the language of mystical union demonstrates the value of a reading of Luther like that of Gerhard Forde's, with its emphasis on death and resurrection. The Eastern view differs considerably due to its roots in the Neo-Platonic philosophy of being. As a result of its strong reliance on this particular ontic paradigm, any talk of Christ's becoming a sinner in the place of the believer is unthinkable. For Christ to become a sinner would only make him ontologically incomplete; something that would by no means be salvific. The destruction of the old being within this paradigm could never be anything but a metaphor for the ascension of the believer from ontological privation to wholeness. Instead, for the Easterner, Christ is salvific precisely because he is the most ontologically complete being and therefore can communicate his completeness to others.

Therefore, Luther's use of mystical union in fact constitutes no real point of contact with Orthodoxy. On the contrary, it represents a complete repudiation of Neo-Platonic philosophy on which Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism rely. Bearing this in mind, Mannermaa's argument merely highlights a rather superficial similarity in terminology and conceptuality. For this reason and the ones mentioned above, it is very hard to see how this work represents a significant challenge to traditional interpretations to Luther.

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Tractatus de legitima scripturae sacrae interpretatione (1610). By Johann Gerhard. Latin-German. Critically edited, commented, provided with an epilogue by Johann Anselm Steiger with cooperation by Vanessa von der Lieth. With a prefatory note by Hans Christian Knuth. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Verlag frommann-holzboog, 2007. 541 pages.

Time and again it is claimed by the majority of today's biblical exegetes that there is no alternative to the post-En-

lightenment historical-critical method when it comes to the interpretation of the Scriptures. Pre-Enlightenment exegesis is considered to be dogmatic, unscientific, and uncritical or unconscious concerning the exegete's or the traditional church's so-called *Vorverständnis* (preunderstanding). Thus, the claim is made that only the application of the historical-critical method can free the exegesis of the Bible and the church as such from dogmatic restrictions of understanding. This has resulted in neglecting even the study of pre-Enlightenment hermeneutical reflection. It is widely denied that anything can be learned, especially from the theologians of Lutheran orthodoxy who are considered to be the worst examples of a stubborn and intellectually poor misuse of the Holy Scriptures as a quarry for their artificial and impractical (merely theoretical) theological systems.

But quite the opposite is true, as can be seen in the works of scholars like Robert Preus, Bengt Hägglund, and Johann Anselm Steiger. Especially Steiger, with his research into long-forgotten aspects of biblical interpretation in Lutheran orthodoxy, has shown that the orthodox theologians with their deep understanding of the Trinitarian unity of the Old and New Testament arrive at a deeper, broader, and by far more colorful and lively interpretation of the Bible than most present-day exegetes.* This makes one curious about the long-forgotten sources of those unmatched Lutheran fathers.

Therefore any effort that makes their writings accessible again in our time of theological barrenness and infertility has to be praised. Even those friends and readers of John Gerhard who know, for example, his *Sacred Meditations* or the nineteenth- to twenty-first-century editions of his *Loci* have not yet been able to receive and read Gerhard's most important work on biblical hermeneutics, his *Tractatus*, which Gerhard wrote as early as 1610. The *Tractatus* is, as Steiger writes in his epilogue on the history of the text, Gerhard's first major publication on the Scriptures and their interpretation. Steiger calls it a sophisticated and well-founded exposition of rules for biblical interpretation that belongs to the most important hermeneutical works between Flacius and Glassius. Next to the *Philologia* by Gerhard's favorite student Glassius, Gerhard's *Tractatus* is the most widely used hermeneutical textbook of that time. Later on Gerhard himself incorporated the *Tractatus* into the volume on *Scriptura Sacra* in his *Loci*. Unfortunately, however, Eduard Preus left the *Tractatus* out when he reprinted the *Loci* in the nineteenth century. This had the effect that for a very long time Gerhard was forgotten as one of the most important hermeneutical thinkers of Lutheranism. Steiger even implies that this was already due to Gerhard's inclusion of his *Tractatus* in the *Loci*, because from then on the *Tractatus* as a stand-alone hermeneutical work was overlooked and later even forgotten.

In the volume at hand, Steiger publishes the German and Latin versions of the *Tractatus* side by side. And he adds Gerhard's still earlier disputation *Theoremata de Scripturae Sacrae interpretatione* (1604), which Gerhard wrote for his visit to Balthasar Mentzer of Marburg during his educational journey through South Germany. The *Theoremata*, which are in Latin only, are an important early preparatory work for Gerhard's *Tractatus* and, according to Steiger, can be read as an introduction as well as a summary of the *Tractatus*, for which Mentzer wrote the dedicatory poem when it was published, another nice proof of the friendship and close cooperation between these two famous theologians.

Gerhard's *Tractatus* shows that he had thoroughly worked through the biblical hermeneutic of the Early Church and the Reformation. Throughout his book he also confronts his insights with the post-Tridentine Roman Catholic hermeneutic as represented by Stapleton and Bellarmine. And Gerhard's dispute with these two scholars is certainly most relevant even today. In his foreword, Gerhard calls upon church father Irenaeus, who had defended the authority of Holy Writ in conflicts on doctrine in the church. His claim is that Bellarmine — with his understanding that the Scriptures are neither clear nor sufficient nor self-interpreting but in need of the church's decision and extrabiblical tradition — really shares the views of the heretics who opposed Irenaeus. Gerhard makes sure that all theological conflict is about the true interpretation of the Scriptures according to the rule of faith that is put forth by the Scriptures, not by any other authority. Even the German preface by the publisher Johann Berner shows that the Lutheran fathers had a keen awareness of the actual diversity of biblical interpretation, including the Jewish one.

Gerhard's approach to biblical hermeneutics is Trinitarian from the outset. The inspiration of the Scriptures and the institution of the preaching office based on the writings of Christ's apostles are closely tied together. The Papists, on the other side, with their conviction that only the church can decide whether an interpreter has rightly understood the Spirit's opinion, tear the spirit from the letter. They view the Scriptures as a waxen nose, a dead body. They ascribe clarity to the church's tradition, even though it is far more ambiguous than the Scriptures could ever be. But what is truly dark and hinders true understanding is, according to Gerhard, not the lacking clarity or inefficacy of the Scriptures, but the human heart. True enlightenment of the heart, therefore, comes only through the Spirit-filled word of the Scriptures (and not vice versa). Gerhard acknowledges that there are dark passages in the Scriptures. Yet what is necessary for salvation and for the foundation of the church is clear in the Scriptures and is fundamental for the rule of faith, the sum of doctrine. True understanding results from interpreting Scripture through Scripture, from an ongoing comparative study of the biblical books. Prayer is as necessary as the knowledge of the languages, of grammar and rhetoric, of dialectic and physics.

Neither the praxis nor the tradition of the church can serve as judge over interpretation, since *they* are the entities in need of a discerning judge. The fathers, where they can be followed, submit themselves to the authority of the Scriptures, something that Gerhard proves with many, many quotations (Steiger copiously documents the sources from the fathers as well as from

* See our review of Steiger's 2002 *Fünf Zentralthemen der Theologie Luthers und seiner Erben: Communicatio-Imago-Figura-Maria-Exempla in* Logia 15, no. 4 (Reformation 2006): 43–45.

Gerhard's Roman opponents in the footnotes, a most valuable editorial service to the reader). The Lutherans believe that the rule of faith, which is decisive in the conflict of interpretation and in understanding dark passages of the Bible, is clearly and sufficiently put forth in the Scriptures. Gerhard asks: If, as Bellarmine claims, the Scriptures' own means for understanding are not sufficient, why should extending the authoritative context to include the tradition of the church be of any help?

Gerhard also acknowledges the differences between the biblical books and the special character of each of them, which exegesis has to take seriously. Yet at the same time he underlines the unity of the Scriptures as work of the one divine Spirit who uses these Scriptures to speak even to us today. Christ's example in Matthew 4 clearly shows that only through the Scriptures can their misuse be overcome. A true interpreter is the one who receives true understanding from the text, and not the one who adds his understanding to the text. Gerhard takes a different approach when it comes to allegorical texts, which have to be understood in light of the nonallegorical parts of Scripture. Also the histories of the Bible can be interpreted allegorically if the history itself is left unharmed. But the relevance of allegorical interpretation is not the foundation of doctrine but the illustration of faith in sermons.

A prime paradigm for the conflict and the solution of the conflict of interpretations Gerhard sees in the discussion on the Lord's Supper. True interpretation is achieved when Christ's unique and effective word overcomes the limitation of man's reason and not vice versa. To be sure: Gerhard discusses even the manifold exegetical problems that are still being discussed even today, like the genealogy of Jesus and the chronology of his passion, to name but two popular topics. Many mistakes in interpretation, according to Gerhard, are caused by a lack of understanding as to how all aspects of faith are inseparably theologically connected throughout the Scriptures.

Throughout his work Gerhard also stresses that biblical interpretation is a spiritual activity, which cannot be salutary without prayer, diligent meditation, and temptation, that is, without experiencing the "realities" of Scripture. Researching the Scriptures is receptive, like eating and drinking. Not the ability or excellence of the interpreter is decisive but the quality of the received realities sustains his ability and excellence. Theology, according to Gerhard, is like wine. It can be used or misused. Misuse makes furious and mad. Right use has a healing effect upon the recipient.

It is impossible to give even an approximate impression of the depth and richness of Gerhard's thoughts in a review. Every pastor will receive a huge amount of impulses for his own theological work, especially for his sermons and his catechesis. Perhaps the most valuable insight of this book is the discovery that many of the critical arguments of modern hermeneutics and present-day historical-critical exegetes against the authority of Scripture are in accordance with the classical Roman Catholic approach.

Thus Gerhard's excellent work shows clearly that the serious conflicts on biblical interpretation cannot and must not be resolved by the notion of an evolutionary process that implies that there is "progress" in understanding, which has come to its peak since the Enlightenment. Instead, the conflicts of interpretation go throughout the ages from Genesis 3 via Matthew 4 all the way to the judgment on the Last Day. Since it is only Holy Writ that brings us freedom from all ambiguous—and therefore diabolic—"reinterpretation" or "reconstruction" of the word of God, clarity here is fundamental for the certainty of our salvation and for the well-being of Christ's church.

All these insights offered by Gerhard are priceless. Nevertheless, it is a pity that this volume is extremely expensive (€498, about $670) and almost unaffordable for private individuals. But it is a "must" for every Lutheran seminary or college library, since Steiger has supplied the church of today with one of the most important hermeneutical resources of the true church catholic.

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Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition. Edited by Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007. Paper. 325 pages.

The editors of this volume should be commended for offering a notable contribution to ecumenical scholarship. This book departs refreshingly from the pseudoacademic contrivances that so often typify this genre of literature. This collection of essays arose from a conference entitled "Partakers of the Divine Nature," which was held at and funded by Drew University from 21 to 22 May 2004. Its nineteen essays are divided into five parts: (I) The Context of *Theosis* in Christianity, (II) *Theosis* in Classical and Late Antiquity, (III) *Theosis* in Patristic Thought, (IV) *Theosis* in Medieval and Reformation Thought, and (V) *Theosis* in Modern Thought. This book's nearly flawless composition may be due in large part to the skills of coeditor Jeffery A. Wittung, who is both a PhD candidate at Drew University and an editor at Baker Academic. Unfortunately, one of those few flaws occurs almost immediately in the Introduction by Christensen and Wittung, who describe the "Finnish school of Lutheran studies" and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America pastor and theologian Jonathan Linman as being "within the Reformed tradition" (14).

In Part I, as the title of his opening essay denotes, coeditor Michael J. Christensen seeks successfully in "The Problem, Promise, and Process of *Theosis*" to set the stage for and to defuse readers' prejudices concerning the subject matter contained in subsequent contributions. Due perhaps chiefly to their ecumenical elitism, Orthodox churches are by nature not prone to convergence ecumenism. Consequently, this book does not seek to win converts to Orthodox theology or ecclesiology, and most of the contributors seem to have grasped this notion. Those from non-Orthodox traditions displaying some infatuation with *theosis* (deification) are reminiscent, albeit in

muted form, of quasi-enlightened youth in the 1960s fascinated by Eastern religions. Such contributors are fortunately few and provide contrast for the exceptional essays.

In Part II, John R. Lenz in his essay "Deification of the Philosopher in Classical Greece" provides a thorough discussion of the Greek philosophical antecedents for *theosis* and some other biblically elusive motifs in later Christian thought. Placing this essay at this juncture in the book is editorially well done. The subsequent essays in this section relating to biblical support for *theosis* in the New Testament are worth reading, though not uncritically.

Part III opens with an annoyingly verbose and conceptually bland essay by J. A. McGuckin. This section of the book recovers quickly, however, with Vladimir Kharlamov's probing analysis of Alexandrian and Cappadocian thought entitled "Rhetorical Application of *Theosis* in Greek Patristic Theology." Kharlamov's linguistic study of the polemic and apologetic uses of *theosis* by Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus is insightfully informative and provides a contextual depiction for a topic open to misunderstanding and thus misuse.

Part IV offers discussions of *theosis* from Copto-Arabic, Anselmian, Lutheran, Calvinistic, and Wesleyan perspectives. This portion of the book is most disposed to contributors' stretching the ecumenical applicability and relevance of *theosis*. If used, however, as a means to review mainly Western, denominational theologies as they relate tangentially to a common theme, this section is quite useful. Most disappointing in this section is the essay by Jonathan Linman (mentioned above), the Director of the Center for Christian Spirituality at the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church. His paper entitled "Martin Luther: 'Little Christ for the World'; Faith and Sacraments as Means to *Theosis*" is the most poorly researched contribution to this volume and is plainly a missed opportunity to bring Luther's incisive thinking to this conference and to the wider public. Instead of engaging Luther's thought, particularly that concerning *communicatio idiomatum*, Linman provides an unreflected, hodge-podge of themes and cursory opinions lifted from a few Finnish Luther scholars (Simo Peura and Tuomo Mannermaa) whom he deems as convincing enough "to have won over two of Lutheranism's major, traditional theologians in the United States: Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson" (191). Linman is obviously unaware, but may be pleased to learn, that these two self-proclaimed "evangelical catholics" (a byword for Anglican) might prove much more beneficial to his Episcopalian center for spirituality than they have been for traditional Lutheran theology. In short, although Linman's rudimentary, Lutheran understanding of word and sacrament is adequate, his paper as a whole resembles the work of a first-year seminarian. If submitted for grading, Professor Linman's essay could possibly receive a B-minus had he not twice cited Martin Luther, rather than Phil Schwarzerd, as the author of the Augsburg Confession (193 notes 12 and 13)! Such basic blunders seem common place when Lutherans, individually and denominationally, become effectively Episcopalian.

Part V of the book seeks to convey more recent concepts of *theosis* and their accompanying metaphysics. Discussions of different understandings of grace in Eastern and Western Christianity are interesting and remind Protestant, particularly Lutheran, readers why their theological hermeneutics are perhaps more relevant today than ever, especially in this secular age of ecumenically driven, theological relativism. Both this section and the book itself conclude with an insightful essay by Gösta Hallonsten, now professor of systematic theology at Lund University, Sweden. After reading the preceding essays discussing varying perspectives on *theosis*, the reader can paradoxically gain a sense of losing all perspective on the topic. Hallonsten's essay addresses this lack of clarity that, unfortunately, this volume seeks to address and unwittingly partially perpetuates. Hallonsten helpfully distinguishes between *theosis* as a general Christian theme and *theosis* as a whole system of doctrine. For Hallonsten, theological similarities are not doctrinal identities. With this hermeneutic in hand, he adeptly challenges the Finnish Luther school's appropriation of Luther's theology to find favor with the Orthodox, and further provides the reader with a way to review and to reflect upon all the preceding material in a new light, perhaps for a second or third reading. Concluding this volume with this essay reiterates the above assertion that the editors of this volume are to be commended for an insightful, well-organized, and well-crafted contribution to the history and development of *theosis* in Christian thought.

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Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg. Second Edition. By Stanley J. Grenz. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005.

Among contemporary figures in continental Protestantism, Wolfhart Pannenberg stands out for his unique program of theology. In particular, Pannenberg has been instrumental in reemphasizing God's concrete revelatory acts in history as the central category of Christian theological reflection. This stands over against the trend present in German theology from Strauss to Bultmann of interpreting Scripture primarily as mythology. Similarly, Pannenberg has promoted the idea that theology should be an objective discourse standing in coherence with other forms of public rationality. In particular, he dislikes the interiorization of theology in "pious consciousness" (Schleiermacher) or in "the moment of existential decision" (Bultmann).

For this reason, Stanley Grenz's *Reason for Hope* provides a helpful guide for those interested in Pannenberg as a contemporary figure in Protestant dogmatics and as a helpful corrective to some of the more destructive theological trends of the previous two centuries. Grenz is uniquely qualified to serve as an interpreter of Pannenberg in that the theologian served as his *Doktorvater*. The main focus of the work is an exposition of Pannenberg's three-volume *Systematic Theology*. Nevertheless,

there are also frequent incursions into Pannenberg's earlier work in order to call attention to the overall development of his thought. On top of this, each chapter provides exhaustive presentation of the challenges that have been made to Pannenberg's thought by various contemporary theologians, as well as Pannenberg's response to these criticisms.

This work's completeness, its readability, and its relevance to current debates in contemporary theology recommend it as an excellent guide to either the theologian or layperson interested in this giant of contemporary theology.

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Timothy: Paul's Closest Associate. By Bruce J. Malina. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2008. Paper. 156 pages.

In spite of the intriguing title, there is much about Malina's *Timothy* that gives pause. The author buys into assumptions that are sure to rankle many Lutherans, such as that Romans is only about "travel arrangements" (69) instead of the gospel, that 2 Thessalonians was not by Paul but by his "sons" (44), that a better name for pastors is "Jesus group managers" (127), that the phrase "Kingdom of God" means "the resumption of Israel's rightful place in the world" (66, 72–74, 81, 93, 108, 131), and that "church" should be retranslated "Jesus group" (117, 119, 122, 138 n. 2). The author believes that Jesus, Paul, Timothy, and Luke each represent distinct generations of an emerging movement that only later — in post-Constantinian times — could be called Christian:

> When a first generation has experienced significant and irreversible change rooted in some appreciable social alteration, in response to this experienced change the second generation seeks to ignore (hence "forget") many dimensions of first-generation experience, while the third generation seeks to remember and recover what the second generation sought to forget. We believe that this principle applied to the Jesus groups founded by Paul. The second generation after Paul was undoubtedly struck by Paul's death, given his view that he would be around to experience the transformation to be wrought by the coming kingdom of God (see 1 Cor 15:51: "we shall all not sleep . . . ," that is, die). (110)

With respect to Malina's multiple-generations theory, it is often true that grandchildren (third generation) look back with fondness to the experiences of their grandparents (first generation) who endured, let us say, a harrowing trans-Atlantic crossing, whereas the immigrants' own children (second generation) are ashamed of their parents' old-world language and mannerisms. This sketch is often true to life and based on sound social-historical models (24). However, to use this "principle" to inform the way one reads the New Testament will lead to such unfortunate conclusions as, for example, that Jesus and his group did not have access to writing, that Paul was part of the second generation (so at odds with Jesus' disciples), that the gospels were not written until much later (three or even four generations after Jesus), that 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews are all "forgeries" (see chart, 47). Many of Malina's findings buy into the standard critical orthodoxies that most recently have been put to flight by Richard Bauckham (*Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* [Eerdmans, 2006]) who argues that the gospels were transmitted in the names of the original eyewitnesses, and that early Christians — of whatever generation — would have cared passionately about historical veracity. Hence Malina's assertion that "Jesus communities" were somehow dependent on forgeries only *in the name* of Paul (but not actually *by* him, 112, 115, 117), does not ring true. I am more taken by explanations for the complex process of composition presented in E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing* (Intervarsity, 2004), 94–121.

On the other hand, Malina's social-historical approach puts one onto items that are definitely worth learning, such as the following insight into ancient collectivist thinking:

> First-century persons like Timothy and Paul and Jesus were collectivistic personalities. A collectivistic personality is one who needs other persons to know who he or she is. Every person is embedded in another, in a chain of embeddedness [*sic*], in which the test of interrelatedness is crucial to self-understanding. A person's focus is not on himself . . . , but on the demands and expectations of others, who can grant or withhold acceptance and reputation. In other words, individuals do not act independently.
>
> In a collectivistic world, to act independently would make no sense. To use an example based on our way of naming, consider your last name as truly distinctive. If you were a collectivistic person, everyone would know you, for example, as "Smith of Portland." People would think that all Smiths of Portland share something in common, even if there are many Smiths in Portland. If I get to know one Smith of Portland, I get to know them all. What is unique is family (the Smiths), your village (Portland), your region (western Oregon), your fictive family or association (your club or church), but never you as an individual. All members of the group are equivalently the same; they all share the same significant characteristics. So if you meet one you meet them all. And you can learn about all of them by meeting one of them (as the Latin proverb cited by Vergil had it: *Ab uno disce omnes*, "From one of them learn about all of them," *Aeneid* 2.65). (3–4)

The value of this insight for the church (that we are *Christ's* people, not our own; that we are united by *a common confession of faith*, rather than "agreeing to disagree") seems obvious. Malina did not write his *Timothy* to advance the case of orthodoxy, but a close reading of his work could impress on one the realization that the early Christians were highly orthodox people and valued orthodoxy, as well as the gospel, in their daily lives and ministries. Timothy, dead to himself, con-

scientiously lived in Paul's shadow and deliberately put himself at the disposal of other Christians and the church (46, 59, 63, 93–94), much as pastors still do today.

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Trinity, Time, and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson. Edited by Colin E. Gunton. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000.

Among the major Lutheran theologians of the second half of the twentieth century, Robert W. Jenson stands out for a number of reasons. Not only has he won for himself a significant number of admirers for his extreme erudition among the ecumenical community in North America and elsewhere, but his influence continues to persist within liberal Lutheran circles through his *Christian Dogmatics* (a compilation of articles by various theologians coedited with Carl Braaten), which continues to serve as the chief textbook for seminarians of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. For this reason, *Time, Trinity, and Church* in many ways is a helpful introduction to themes of Jenson's theology and a timely response to many of his theological shortcomings.

In turning to the work itself, we discover a series of topically mixed essays from various theologians. Most of these theologians are prominent in the so-called Evangelical Catholic movement. Though confessional Lutherans have historically styled themselves as true catholics and evangelicals, this group of theologians (who tend mainly to publish in Jenson's journal *Pro Ecclesia*) hold that the confessions of various Christian denominations are complementary rather than contradictory. In particular, Lutherans of this variety (Robert W. Jenson, Carl E. Braaten, David Yeago, and Michael Root) hold that the Evangelical Lutheran Church has a correct understanding of the gospel whereas the Roman Catholic Church has the right structures and ministries to promote the gospel. In other words, the papacy is seen as a unifying force for Christianity, and therefore it is necessary for the sake the gospel for all Christians to place themselves under the ministry of the bishop of Rome.

Because the work comprises nearly twenty-one different essays we will not provide a summary of the whole work but limit ourselves to some of the highlights. Many of the essays have very little to do with Jenson's work in itself, while some represent a misunderstanding of Jenson's theology. An example of the former may be found in the German Lutheran theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg's contribution, which is mainly an outline of his own theology of time with few references to Jenson's theology itself. An example of the latter may be found in the contribution of the American Roman Catholic theologian Susan K. Wood. Wood attempts to critique Jenson's ecclesiology on the basis of Vatican II's claim that the church is a divine-human entity in analogy to the person of Christ. In her critique of Jenson's ecclesiology (that in large measure is the natural corollary of his explicitly Lutheran Christology combined with elements of post–Vatican II Catholic ecclesiology), Wood seems largely unaware that there are any differences between Lutherans and Roman Catholics on the issue of Christology — the most notable example being the *genus maiestaticum*.

One of the highlights of the work is Carl Braaten's introductory biographical essay on the development of the friendship of Jenson and himself and their theology. In particular Braaten shows how Jenson developed from a follower of Herman Preus (he was Preus's TA at Luther Seminary) to the philosophically minded ecumenist that he has become in his old age. In large measure, it is interesting to observe how Jenson and his compatriots are portrayed as throwing off what they considered to be the shackles of confessionalism by challenging the authority structures within various Lutheran denominations at the time. In later life, both Braaten and Jenson now view the shallow and theologically directionless church that they helped to create with horror and hopes that the restoration of the universal authority of the papacy will help crack down on the heresy and theological shallowness that pervades the halls of mainline Protestantism.

Another helpful essay is written by the late Gerhard O. Forde. Forde traces in this essay the trajectory of Jenson's theology of incarnation and Trinity from his doctoral dissertation *The Alpha and Omega* (an interpretation of the theology of Karl Barth) to the first and second volumes of his *Systematic Theology*. Forde demonstrates that by combining Barth's claim that "God being for himself is his being for us" with Lutheran Christology (with a particular emphasis on the *genus maiestaticum*), Jenson completely suppresses the hiddenness of God as Luther would have understood it. This is problematic because it more or less means that proclamation accomplishes nothing. Through the word of promise, God's relationship to us does not change from one of law to gospel, from hidden to revealed. Faith then becomes, as Werner Elert once observed, a kind of enlightenment.

David Yeago (professor of systematic theology at Lutheran Southern) also provides an interesting essay. Yeago tries to justify Jenson's ultrahigh ecclesiology by giving a history of the doctrine of law and church within German Lutheranism over the previous two hundred years. The major thesis of the essay is that the doctrine of the law and the doctrine of ministry became increasing construed in merely functional terms as the result of Pietism, secularization, and the breakdown of the ecclesiastical system of the old Holy Roman Empire in the early nineteenth century. Yeago then traces how this resulted in many of the false interpretations of Luther's two-kingdoms doctrine by the Erlangen school (particularly Emanuel Hirsch). Unfortunately in the end, after a largely accurate review of the Lutheran Confessions' understanding of the doctrine of ministry, Yeago argues that the ministerial office possesses a magisterial authority. His way of describing the relationship between bishop and laity sounds a great deal more like Vatican II than the Augustana.

Overall, those interested in Jenson or in notable contemporary challenges to confessional Lutheranism will doubtless appreciate this collection of essays.

Jack Kilcrease

Briefly Noted

The Righteousness of Faith According to Luther by Hans Joachim Iwand, translated by Randi H. Lundell and edited by Virgil F. Thompson with an introduction by Gregory A. Walter. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2008. Paperback. 105 pages.

Hans Joachim Iwand (1899–1960) was a professor at Göttingen and Bonn who carried forward the scholarship of the Luther Renaissance under the influence of his teacher, Rudolf Hermann. Using the themes of promise and simultaneity, Iwand expounded Luther's theology with vigor and vitality for preaching.

The appearance of this book in English is long overdue. Prior to the appearance of these essays in *Lutheran Quarterly,* little of Iwand had been translated into English, and he was largely unknown in North America except, perhaps, from his influence on the thinking of Gerhard Forde. Hans Joachim Iwand's theological career was forged by an early and ongoing critical engagement with Barth, the necessity of confessional witness in the face of Hitler, and by a profound grasp of the heart of Luther's theology. Like Luther, Iwand's theological work is geared toward the proclamation of the righteousness of faith found only in Christ Jesus. Thus, the fundamental and critical distinction for theology is the distinction between the law and the gospel. Here Iwand is radically and refreshingly Lutheran in a way that deconstructs moralisms of the left and the right so that Christ alone is preached as the end of the law for all who believe. *The Righteousness of Faith According to Luther* is more than just another historical study of a Reformation theme; it is a vigorous exercise in pastoral dogmatics. Iwand teases out the nuances in Luther's distinction of the law from the gospel with provocative insights on nearly every page. This is a volume not simply for Reformation scholars but for seminarians, pastors, and thoughtful laity. I look forward to using it in the classroom and beyond.

Lutheran Reformation and the Law edited by Virpi Mäkinen. Leiden: Brill, 2006. Hardback. 270 pages.

This collection of essays by scholars — church historians, jurists, and theologians — at the University of Helsinki covers a wide array of topics all related to political theory and legal code in the Lutheran Reformation, arranged in two sections: (1) Law, Theology, and Philosophy; (2) Law and Reform. Heikki Pihlajamäki and Risto Saarinen provide a helpful overview of recent scholarship on the Lutheran Reformation and the law. Other contributions deal with natural law, rights and dominion in Luther's thought, canon law in light of Nominalist psychology, *communio sanctorum*, Lutheran marriage laws in Reformation Sweden, criminal law and the Reformation, and Lutheran poor relief.

Luther and the Hungry Poor: Gathered Fragments by Samuel Torvend. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008. Hardback. 177 pages.

This book by a professor of religion at Pacific Lutheran University attempts to fuse a contemporary social awareness to and response to hunger with Luther's own theological ethic of care for the neighbor rooted in God's gift of justification. Torvend is an artful writer whose dependency on Gordon Lathrop's several books on liturgy is gratefully acknowledged. The text of the book is adorned with Reformation woodcuts.

A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church by Franz Dünzl. Translated by John Bowden. London: T. & T. Clark, 2007. Paperback. 148 pages.

Dünzl, a professor of early church history and patristics at Würzburg, provides, as the title suggests, a brief historical accounting of the doctrine of the Trinity. Beginning with the relational language of "Father" and "Son" in the New Testament, the author sees the Trinitarian dogma as necessitated by Christology. He traces the controversies from the Monarchians to post-Nicene developments.

On the Nature of God and on the Trinity by Johann Gerhard. Translated by Richard Dinda and edited with annotations by Benjamin T. G. Mayes. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007. Hardback. 484 pages.

The second volume in *Loci Theologici* to appear in Concordia's ambitious project to provide English-speaking audiences with the archtheologian of Lutheran Orthodoxy, Johann Gerhard, is his work on the Holy Trinity. Gerhard argues from the necessity of the doctrine to engage the scriptural sources for the Trinitarian teaching.

JTP+

Logia Forum

Short Studies and Commentary

Forde Fund to Support Evangelical Theology

The editors and officers of Lutheran Quarterly (*LQ*) *have created an endowment fund in memory of Gerhard O. Forde, the leading voice of "Radical Lutheranism," emphasizing justification by faith alone. Forde was a frequent contributor to* Lutheran Quarterly *and Lutheran Quarterly Books* (*Eerdmans*)*, a longtime vice president of the LQ board, and a professor emeritus of Luther Seminary.*

"With our own personal donations as staff and Board members," said Paul Rorem, editor of *LQ* and LQ Books, "we have committed ourselves to furthering the Forde legacy of proclaiming the gospel through evangelical theology and careful historical scholarship."

With initial gifts in hand, the *LQ* board can apply the Forde Fund to specific publication projects that promote "Radical Lutheranism," such as the recent publication of Forde's own essays (*The Preached God: Proclamation in Word and Sacrament*), edited by his students, associate editors Steven Paulson and Mark Mattes. "As Melanchthon said of Luther," recalled associate editor Timothy Wengert of Philadelphia Seminary, "this is the man who taught us the gospel." The editors invite all his students and readers worldwide to join them in extending Forde's legacy.

For more information, visit the *LQ* website (www.lutheranquarterly.com) or contact managing editor Virgil Thompson at lqinc@aol.com (*Lutheran Quarterly*, 703 West Seventh Avenue, Suite L50, Spokane, WA 99204).

A Marriage Made on Earth

Rev. Klemet Preus preached this wedding sermon in May 2007 for Erika Preus and Jason Gehrke. Happy reading!

This is the most attractive couple I have seen in a long time. I think Erika is just drop-dead gorgeous, she is just the most beautiful bride I have laid eyes on for a long, long time. And, Jason, you are one handsome man.

I was reading the other day in Luther, who contends that Adam and Eve were the most beautiful people ever in the world's history because they were created before the Fall and before sin had tarnished us. I believe that if you take away from this wedding the congregation and the building and the clothes, this couple would be just like Adam and Eve. Now, that makes me wonder, how can we attain that type of marriage that God gave to Adam and Eve in the garden? Because there is a congregation here, and there is a building here, and we do have our clothes.

Every married couple, whether they are married today or have been married for years and years, craves that type of marriage that God envisioned in the garden and that God gave to Adam and Eve. What was that marriage like? Can we have it today? No! Sorry. We have a problem that will not allow us to attain that level of joy and goodness that Adam and Eve had in the Garden, and that is sin.

I was in a bookstore the other day looking in the marriage section, trying to come up with a good idea for this sermon, and I saw a book entitled *How to Keep the Spark in Your Marriage Alive*, and I saw another one entitled *How to Have a Successful Marriage*. It occurred to me that people actually read these books, and that would suggest that the spark in their marriage may have disappeared or they may sense that their marriage is unsuccessful. You do not write how-to books for people who do not need them.

Then I was reading 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul does talk about marriage, and it struck me that he says it is better not to get married. So it is not too late for you two. He also says that because you are going to go and fornicate if you do not get married, you should get married. So, one of the reasons to get married is because he knows that you are going to go have sex.

So let's make it legitimate. Then three verses later — get this, three verses later — Paul says to the husband and to the wife, "Do not deprive each other."

Now, doesn't that strike you as kind of unusual, that in one verse he says, "I have to give you marriage so that you will have a legitimate way to have sex," and then three verses later, he has to command them to do that very thing? Why? That seems unusual. I will tell you why: because of sin. The thing that we love the most is the thing that we stop doing once it becomes legitimate. Then he has to tell us to do it. It is sin. We know that it is true, not just because it is in the Bible, but because every married couple here has experienced precisely that. We live in a sinful world.

I am going to tell you another phenomenon of sin that I have noticed in many marriages — not mine, but many marriages. It is that we all leave victims in our sin. In the second table of the law, sin tends to be breaking the law against another person, and therefore somebody is a victim. Somebody gets hurt. If you do not honor your parents, both you and your parents get hurt. Do not steal; someone loses. Do not kill; someone will be dead or hurt. Do not commit adultery; someone is cheated upon. And what happens in a marriage is that before marriage, your sins tend to be diffuse in nature. There are many victims. But the more you live with the same person over a long period of time, the more the one that you are with becomes the one you sin against. So, harsh words are often spoken to your spouse. Am I right? The bitterness that you may normally feel towards just about everybody is going to zero in on one person. It seems like the marriage of Eden is as far away as it can possibly be.

And if you don't believe in sin because you don't see it in your own heart and experience it in your life and the lives of others, you can certainly see its results all around. Before the Fall, there were no broken homes, there were no burnt up cabins, no — none of those things, which are the result of the Fall. The first marriage has gone awry.

So how can you attain that marriage from Eden? You can't. But I think we can try to understand it a little bit, and that should help us somewhat — both you, Jason and Erika, as you go into marriage, and those of us who happen to find ourselves in this blessed estate.

The marriage of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden teaches us three things: first of all, that marriage pictures Jesus. You all know the passages from Ephesians. (I tried to talk Erika and Jason into having it in the readings, but I failed.) "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Wives, honor your husbands, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. As the church submits to Christ, so wives must submit to their husbands." What this tells us, and I have always believed this, is that, well, it seems as though God is looking for an example of what makes a good husband and a good wife, and he finds Christ and the church as that example.

But I have rethought this. You can learn new things at an old age. I am convinced that God was not using Jesus as an example to teach us about marriage, but that God, in the garden, was establishing marriage because he wanted to picture how he would save us with his Son, Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of John, the glories of his cross belong to the Son from the foundation of the world. The High Priestly Prayer talks about Jesus' being glorified with the glory he had before creation. Yet we know that in John's Gospel glory is the cross. So God has the cross in his mind from the very beginning. In the Book of Revelation, John talks about Jesus' being slain from the creation of the world. So God's mind and God's heart are full of the sacrifice of Jesus even as he gives Eve to Adam and as they establish a marriage.

I know this is hard for us. We tend to think chronologically. First there is marriage, then there is sin, then there is the Savior. Of course, that is how we are going to think. That is how we are made. But in God's eyes, Jesus is front and center in everything he does. So when he gives a man and a woman to each other and says to sacrifice and submit, he is doing that because Jesus Christ is the sacrifice, and we, the church, submit to him. That is a picture of marriage even before it happened.

The marriage in Eden teaches us something else far more obvious. It teaches us that everything from God is a gift. It teaches us, really, about grace. Adam, it says, was caused to fall into a deep sleep. This tells me that men do their best while sleeping deeply. The best thing that ever happened to Adam happened while he was sound asleep. And this is a picture of marriage too. Guys spend their whole life "cruising chicks" and figuring out how to get this one or possess that one, and meanwhile God has a gift in mind for them. I think that God had Erika in mind for Jason forever and that all of the machinations that Jason endeavored and all the angst he probably experienced was all for nothing, because God had a gift in mind for him. It was more like he was sleeping deeply, and vice versa. I mean, I think that all the anxiety that Erika endured over men throughout her life, God had it planned out already. It was a gift.

When he gave the woman (we will get to that in a minute) it says he brought her to the man. It is not like he made six or eight women and paraded them all, and Adam said, "I don't like that one, she's a little too tall. I would rather have a short one." That is not what he did. No, he said, "This is the woman. This is the only one. There is nothing to compare her to. You really don't know if she is all that good-looking, because this is the only woman you are going to see as your wife." God did not even discuss it with Adam ahead of time. He didn't say, "I saw all those animals, and, okay, it's not so good. I am going to give you a deep anesthetic. Start counting backwards from 100, and if you obey, I will have a surprise." You just get the feeling Adam was out, wakes up, and there she was. His response when he saw her was humble that way. It was like he was surprised. "Oh, this is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." So it is a gift.

Now, I have to say that right now you look like you are both wonderfully wrapped presents to each other, but it is not always that way. There will come a different time. Jason is going to be a pastor, which is a great aspiration. He is going

to come home beat up by some congregational member — unless he ends up getting a church like this — and he is going to be frustrated, and he is going to sit down and not be particularly responsive to Erika's needs, because he is going to be just completely exhausted. And, still, he is going to be a wonderful gift. And Jason is going to come home that day and think that his wife ought to show a little compassion and sensitivity. After all, if you can't get sensitivity from your wife, from whom can you get it? And she is going to have been fighting with the kids all day long, and he is going to be disappointed and frustrated, and guess what? It is still a gift. And when you get mean to each other, which possibly could happen, and you argue with each other, which may occur from time to time, it is still a gift.

You see, we tend to look at marriage and courtship psychologically. We tend to look at all the decisions that were made and all the discussions you had, the boyfriend, the girlfriend, and all that stuff that you were going through: "Should I say yes? Will he ask me?" Or, Jason, you know, "Should I say yes, and will she ask me?" I don't know. But God wants you to look at it theologically, not psychologically. It is a gift, end of story. He brought her to the man. No discussion. The man took her. It is kind of like we look at conversion and the new birth psychologically. "Oh, Jesus, I ask you to abide in my heart." I make a psychological decision. But God does not want us to do that. It is a gift. So marriage is a gift. Your wife is a gift. Your husband is a gift. Recognize this is so.

The third thing that the marriage of Eden teaches us is the theology of the cross. That is all we will leave you with today. The theology of the cross means that God does his greatest work through lowly, insignificant, mundane, commonplace, little things. So God did his greatest work by this little tiny baby in a manger. Nobody got the news except some shepherds, and that was God's greatest work. God does his greatest work sleeping in the front of a boat while the sea is raging. God does his greatest work kneeling in the Garden of Gethsemane and sweating great drops of blood. That is God's greatest work. God does his greatest work hanging on a cross and crying out in agony, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" That is God's greatest work. That is the work by which he forgives you your sins and saves you eternally. That is his greatest work of all. God does his greatest work through water, just plain old water. God does his greatest work through bread and wine, which is the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the sacrament. He adds words to these mundane things and that is God's greatest work.

So God's greatest work with a man is the woman, but not in her beauty, not in her charm. Here is what Luther had to say. He was commenting on Genesis 2 where it says God gave Eve to the man. The ESV translation says, "God made a woman," but actually the Hebrew text says he "built a woman." Only God could build a woman. Luther points out that the word *build* is the same word that is used in building a home, building a house. Then he said these incredible words: "Adam reveals a mystery hitherto unknown in the world that the purpose of the wife is to be a mundane dwelling place to her husband." Now, isn't that charming? Try that on your wife tonight. Go home and say, "You know what, honey? You are the greatest mundane dwelling place I have ever had." A mundane dwelling place to your husband.

We like the wife to be bells and whistles and frills and beautiful, like Erika is today, and we like our husbands to be handsome in the same way. But, mundane? What does mundane mean? It means "of the world," *la monde* in French. It means earthly, it means commonplace, it means things you see every day. It is like bread and wine and water and babies and men on crosses. Your wife has to be in that category, Jason, and your husband has to be in that category, Erika. The marriage is blessed when we treat each other as common everyday things, as things that you are kind of used to, like sliding into an old pair of slippers or falling asleep on that old sofa. True, lasting, godly marriages are not ones where we think that the person is just the greatest thing that walks on water, but where we know they are our mundane dwelling places. You come home at the end of the day or you come home at the end of a trip, and you look at each other and you kiss each other or hold hands or whatever it is you do, and you are supposed to go, "Ah, this is what I have got, and this is what I have got for good. This is what I have got from God."

So the marriage of Eden was a pretty good marriage. I wouldn't say it was marriage made in heaven. It was made on earth. It is a marriage that all of us should aspire to. It is a marriage that teaches us about ourselves and about Jesus Christ. The marriage of Eden pictures Jesus and his sacrifice for his church. The marriage of Eden shows God's ways; he is a giving God. The marriage of Eden teaches the theology of the cross. All these are lessons that you, Jason and Erika, can take with you through your whole life long, and all of you can take home today as well. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Proper Subject of Theology!

If you have not read any Dr. Luther lately, check out his lectures on Psalm 51 given during the summer of 1532. It provides foundational Reformation theology. Consequently it provides the highest of pastoral care. That, of course, is the proper distinction between the law and the gospel — death to the old Adam and resurrection of the new man through the forgiveness of sins — that the sinner is justified coram Deo sola fide propter Christum. Let the reader be warned: Dr. Luther does not follow the model of pastoral care prescribed by today's tyrannical purpose-driven or acquire-the-fire scholastics. Here is a sample from AE 12: 310–312 just to whet your appetite.

"In it [Psalm 51] David, or rather the Holy Spirit in David, instructs us in the knowledge of God and of ourselves. He does both of these gloriously. First he clearly shows sin, then the knowledge of God, without which there is despair.

"This knowledge of sin, moreover, is not some sort of speculation or an idea that the mind thinks up for itself. It is a true feeling, a true experience, and a very serious struggle of the heart, as he testifies when he says (v. 3), 'I know (that is, I feel or experience) my transgressions.' This is what the Hebrew word [*yada'*] really means. It does not mean, as the pope taught, to call to mind what one has done and what one has failed to do, but it means to feel and to experience the intolerable burden of the wrath of God. The knowledge of sin is itself the feeling of sin, and the sinful man is the one who is oppressed by his conscience and tossed to and fro, not knowing where to turn. Therefore we are not dealing here with the philosophical knowledge of man, which defines man as a rational animal and so forth. Such things are for science to discuss, not for theology. So a lawyer speaks of man as an owner and master of property, and a physician speaks of man as healthy or sick. But a theologian discusses man as a sinner. In theology, this is the essence of man. The theologian is concerned that man become aware of this nature of his, corrupted by sins. When this happens, despair follows, casting him into hell. In the face of the righteousness God, what shall a man do who knows that his whole nature has been crushed by sin and that there is nothing left on which he can rely, but that his righteousness has been reduced to exactly nothing? When the mind has felt this much, the other part of this knowledge should follow. This is not a matter of speculation either, but completely of practice and feeling. A man hears and learns what grace and justification are, what God's plan is for the man who has fallen into hell, namely, that he has decided to restore man through Christ. Here the dejected mind cheers up, and on the basis of this teaching of grace it joyfully declares: 'Though I am a sinner in myself, I am not a sinner in Christ, who has been made Righteousness for us (1 Cor 1:30). I am righteous and justified through Christ, the Righteous and the Justifier, who is and is called the Justifier because he belongs to sinners and was sent for sinners.'

"This is the twofold theological knowledge that David teaches in this psalm, so that the content of the psalm is the theological knowledge of man and also the theological knowledge of God. Let no one, therefore, ponder the Divine Majesty, what God has done and how mighty he is; or think of man as the master of his property, the way the lawyer does; or of his health, the way the physician does. But let him think of man as sinner. The proper subject of theology is man guilty of sin and condemned, and God the Justifier and Savior of man the sinner. Whatever is asked or discussed in theology outside this subject is error and poison. All Scripture points to this, that God commends his kindness to us and in his Son restores to righteousness and life the nature that has fallen into sin and condemnation. The issue here is not this physical life: what we should eat, what work we should undertake, how we should rule our family, how we should till the soil. All these things were created before man in Paradise and were put into man's hands when God said (Gen 1:28), 'Have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air.' The issue here is the future and eternal life; the God who justifies, repairs, and makes alive; and man, who fell from righteousness and life into sin and eternal death. Whoever follows this aim in reading the Holy Scriptures will read holy things fruitfully.

"Therefore this theological knowledge is necessary: A man should know himself, should know, feel, and experience that he is guilty of sin and subject to death; but he should also know the opposite, that God is the Justifier and Redeemer of a man who knows himself this way. The care of other men, who do not know their sins, let us leave to lawyers, physicians, and parents, who discuss man differently from the way a theologian does."

Romanism: American Evangelical Style

Romanists who have read their catechism know that they are to exercise their free will with the help of God's grace regarding the process of justification. Erasmus, despite all his lampooning and critique of Rome, was faithful to Rome and an enemy of Dr. Luther on this particular theological point. Free will was and is a *sine qua non* for Rome.

American Evangelicals do not make the sign of the holy cross or genuflect, but they are in the same theological bed with Rome when it comes to free will's importance to salvation. Until a sinner exercises his free will and makes a decision for Jesus, he is not saved. Both Rome and American Evangelicals deny, qualify, or spin these words: "I *cannot* by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel . . . " Those words confess the truth of Holy Scripture, that the Holy Spirit alone creates faith through the preaching of Christ for a sinner bound in his rebellion against God. American Evangelicals are Romanists whether they know it or not. For both of them free will is essential to salvation. This is precisely why many of the Campus Crusade types or American Evangelicals like Scott Hahn have converted to Rome. Or why many prominent American Evangelicals have come to a consensus with Rome on justification and why priests like Richard John Neuhaus dialogue so well with American Evangelicals like Chuck Colson. They have common theological principles.

Recently, a flagship, "courageous," and to-be-copied congregation in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod invited back into her midst to preach on Father's Day an American Evangelical with his own "ministry." Returning again was Nebraska assistant football coach Ron Brown. He held sway in his high-priestly Husker-masculine way. At the end of his "sermon" or "testimony" in typical American Evangelical style that flows from its substance, Coach Brown conducted—for lack of a better term—an altar call so that sinner dads could exercise their free will for the sake of their salvation (http://kingspod.com/blog/audio/20080615_FathersDay_RonBrown.mp3). Billy Graham, Charles Finney,

Dwight Moody, Oral Roberts, Joyce Meyer, and D. James Kennedy would all be proud.

This all reminds me of the days when I dated a fundamental Baptist girl in high school. Same old routine. The altar call was always for me. I wasn't a Christian because I was baptized as a baby by sprinkling and because I had never exercised my free will publicly to decide to make Jesus the Lord and Master of my life! Coach Brown's camp-style sermon and altar call flows from his free-will, American-Evangelical, revivalist, and ironically, Roman theology.

Such false theology and practice of these revivalist American-Evangelical free-will Romanists are like the Borg from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. It is taking over American Lutheranism and American Lutheranism offers little resistance. Some church officials choose to ignore what is happening on their watch. Others push and force it upon congregations because they are desperate to preserve, save, and lead the institution to glory by increasing membership statistics. After all, who would dare argue with results?

Romanism is alive and well in Lutheranism. Where? Among pastors who chant, wear clericals, don chasubles, and read *Logia* Forum? No. Romanism thrives and metastasizes in congregations whose pastors have not only adopted the American Evangelical camp "style" but also its *sine qua non* theological substance: the exercise of the free will with regard to salvation. The opposite of all that, of course, is the Small Catechism's faithful summary of the Scriptures in the Third Article's explanation. Might want to think "outside the box," truly be courageous, and try that for a change.

BWK

"It Was All Over with Augustine!"

On Easter Sunday of 2008 former Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) pastor Dan Woodring converted to Rome. He has blogged his conversion story. The story is another example of the old Adam's justifying himself before others, before the world, and of course before God. The old Adam always wants to be right and prove everyone else wrong, especially God! The old Adam refuses to live sola fide, propter Christum, coram Deo, by his externum verbum of promise. For then he would have to die.

But Mr. Woodring is absolutely right about one thing. It is this: the confession to which he has converted is thoroughly Augustinian! He makes this point very clearly. Here is the quote: "As I continued my research, I began to realize that what I had thought [the] Catholic Church taught on Justification, was not what they really taught. I came to understand that the Scholastic Occamist view of justification, which was semi-pelagian, the view criticized most extensively in the Confessions was not what the Catholic Church teaches, now or then. The view presented in the Roman Confutation and at Trent was pure Augustinianism, and was the doctrine that every major Church Fathers [*sic*] maintained."

Yes, indeed, St. Augustine remains the most influential church father in the Western church. Pope John Paul II was, and Pope Benedict XVI is, thoroughly Augustinian. Martin Luther took the Augustinian tradition very seriously. *Facere quod in se est*, run through the Augustinian sieve of a sanative salvation from vice to virtue whereby faith must be formed by love, was a matter of eternal life or death for him. So in order to try harder at his salvation with the help of God's performance-enhancing drug called grace, the promising law student broke the Fourth Commandment and became an Observant Augustinian friar. "I took the vow . . . for the sake of my salvation" (AE 54: 338).

Even though St. Augustine and the Augustinian tradition were helpful to Dr. Luther (as witnessed, for example, by the 1519 sermons on the sacraments in which the constant refrain, "Everything depends on faith!" is heard, or by the well-known quote in the Large Catechism: "*Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum*"), the Reformation was essentially a break from the bishop of Hippo and the entire Scholastic tradition informed by him as well as his interpreters, most especially regarding the sinner's justification *coram Deo*.

St. Augustine did have his theological weaknesses here. The bishop pushed a sanative salvation that gets worked out on a continuum from sin to sanctification. It is not a *sola fide* justification. Instead, it is a salvation of the righteous. It is a salvation that goes like this: only after I become righteous in myself do I have salvation. Or to put it another way: God justifies the godly. This is still the Roman position no matter what theological school you push. Faith is confessed but it is never enough. Faith can never stand alone before God. It must always be formed by love.

Dr. Luther's Reformation discovery was that Scripture gives witness to a justification that is a divine forensic declaration or promise to the sinner *propter Christum* received *sola fide*. This forensic declaration or promise given in the spoken and sacramental word actually does and gives what it says so that the sinner's relationship with God is actually changed. The blessed apostle Paul categorically states: "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (Rom 3:28; also 4:3–5; 5:1; Gal 2:16; 3:2). "'Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying, 'all the nations shall be blessed in you.' . . . Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for 'the righteous man shall live by faith'" (Gal 3:6–8, 11). "For if the inheritance is based on law it is no longer based on a promise, but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise" (Gal 3:18; see also 3:24–25).

Dr. Luther ran with the clear teaching of Paul in Holy Scripture. He states in 1532: "Ever since I came to an under-

standing of Paul, I have not been able to think well of any doctor [of the church]. They have become of little value to me. At first I devoured, not merely read, Augustine. But when the door was opened for me in Paul, so that I understood what justification by faith is, *it was all over with Augustine*" (AE 54: 49, emphasis mine). Had Dr. Luther stuck it out with Augustine there would have been no Reformation as we know it. When given the choice between St. Augustine and St. Paul the answer was a no-brainer for Dr. Luther: St. Paul all the way, baby! The apostle always trumps the bishop, especially with regard to *justification coram Deo*.

And so Dr. Luther issued a warning to the Lutherans who believed there had been a breakthrough with Rome regarding justification at Regensburg in 1541. The Roman theologians who attended were Cardinal Gasparo Contarini, Johann Eck, and Johann Gropper. Article Five of *The Regensburg Book* confessed that "sinners" are justified *coram Deo* by "a living faith." But what exactly is a living faith? The answer went like this: "That faith is living therefore, which apprehends mercy in Christ, and believes that justice that is in Christ is imputed to him and at the same time receives the promise of the Holy Spirit and love. Therefore justifying faith is that faith that is efficacious through love." The *fides formata caritate* language is purposely avoided. But it is the same Augustinian theology: imputation plus sanctification (a sanative salvation)! Dr. Luther rejected *The Regensburg Book*. He called it a patchwork formula and the gluing together of two irreconcilable views.

The warning comes in 1545 when Dr. Luther reminds the evangelicals that St. Augustine and the Augustinian tradition cannot be trusted. St. Augustine has a weakness or imperfection, if you will, when it comes to imputation. Dr. Luther states, "Later I read Augustine's *The Spirit and the Letter*, where contrary to hope I found that he, too, interpreted God's righteousness in a similar way, as the righteousness with which God clothes us when he justifies us. Although this was heretofore said imperfectly and he did not explain all things concerning imputation clearly, it nevertheless was pleasing that God's righteousness with which we are justified was taught" (AE 34: 337). Close, but no cigar with St. Augustine.

Rediscovering St. Augustine was only helpful to a certain extent, especially when it comes to a *sola fide propter Christum* justification *coram Deo*. This is Dr. Luther's point. And so even today as one rediscovers or "devours" St. Augustine one must keep his imperfection in mind. The bishop does not properly distinguish between the law and the gospel regarding imputation. Justification for St. Augustine is essentially a moral matter, not a mortal one (both for God and for sinners). The law doesn't kill and damn Jesus as God and as a sinner when he does his Good Friday job, and it certainly doesn't put the old Adam to death on a daily basis. Instead, the gospel (in the Augustinian tradition) is keeping the law as the sinner exercises his free will (even if it is just the tiniest bit) together with the help of God's grace so that the somewhat righteous in the church (the love place) eventually reach their eschatological goal: the beatific vision of God who is love (like attracts like after all; check out Benedict's "Love" encyclical). And when the gospel is really just a new law, another center takes the place of the scriptural teaching of forensic justification. What is that? It is the doctrine of a rightly ordered church located across the Tiber where the bishop of Rome sits.

So Mr. Woodring rightly points out what every Lutheran pastor should learn very well: devour St. Augustine without taking into consideration his "imperfection" and Rome is where you will end up. On the other hand, cling to St. Paul and "it is all over with Augustine." "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (Rom 3:28).

BWK

C. F. W. Walther: Absolution, part iv

We continue with the series from Dr. Walther. The following is the part 4. (*Part 3 is to be translated soon.*) *"Holy Absolution Rescued from the Slander of the Methodists"* (*"Die heilige Absolution gerettet gegen die Lästerungen der Methodisten"*), *Der Lutheraner 2* (*1846*): *73–74. Translated by Thomas Obersat.*

Were it taught in the Lutheran Church that the outward speaking and listening to the words of absolution works forgiveness *ex opere operato* (merely because the work is carried out), Mr. Nast would not wrongly maintain that the doctrine of the divine validity of absolution "attacks at the very root the work of the Holy Spirit who alone brings grace."

Hopefully Mr. Nast[1] at least knows that it is taught in the Lutheran Church that without a true living faith no one can receive absolution, even if it were spoken to him a thousand times a day, and that this true faith in the words of absolution is worked solely through the power of the Holy Ghost. So it is not the efficacy of the Holy Spirit that is attacked "at the very root" by the doctrine of absolution, but rather the spirit of Methodism.

A root of Methodism is that one does not test the spirits: all coarse enthusiasm, fallout of an ardent fantasy; all dreams of one's own heart, even if they have but a spiritual luster, they regard and give credence as works of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, one must certainly be hostile towards the doctrine of absolution, which clearly states that the Holy Ghost works solely through the word, and that therefore the spirit who comes apart from the word and disputes the word must be a false spirit.

Another root of Methodism is this, that they despise the external witness of the Holy Spirit by means of the word and the holy sacraments, and thus they separate them from the internal witness. They do not teach terrified sinners how they are to ground their faith on the external witness, so that the Spirit of God might truly witness in their hearts. Rather the opposite, they warn the souls not to believe the external

witness unless they first have a lively internal feeling and experience. Thus souls are pushed into a false personal work and instructed how they themselves are to toil and fight to gain grace. But according to God's word the attaining of grace is not by one's own toil; rather, once man has obtained grace, then the wrestling and chasing after it takes place and continues until one enters through the narrow gate and obtains the goal of salvation (Lk 13:24, Phil 2:12–13; 3:13–15).

Man has no power of his own to do these works unless and until he receives the new life from God by grace. He who tries to attain grace on his own fights against grace. For the holy Apostle states: "It is out of grace, not out of works (struggles and such), otherwise grace would not be grace. But if it is out of merit of works (struggles) then grace is nothing; otherwise merit is not merit" (Rom 11:6).

The real root of Methodism is the establishing of man's own righteousness and his personal deeds. Whoever does not recognize this, will in his battles against Methodism be engaged in a sham fight.

The doctrine of absolution, therefore, attacks Methodism by its root. For that reason they utter such horrible slanders against it: apparently they realize that here they fight for their lives. This is very obvious: where the doctrine of absolution is believed, there will be no room for Methodism. Clearly, absolution rightly understood strikes down with one blow the legalistic intricacies, any games of penance, the pushing of the Spirit, and the soul quackery of Methodism.[2]

Obviously, holy absolution would clearly show that it is hypocrisy when Methodists say they also teach that a person is righteous and saved before God by grace alone, for by the absolution a person is called away from anything of his own and pointed solely to the word; it cries out to him:

> Though it should seem he were opposed, Be thou by this not frightened, For where he is at best with thee, His wont is not to show it. His word take thou more certain still, and though thy heart say only "No," Yet let thyself not shudder.[3]

From this Methodists will no doubt draw the conclusion that Lutherans do not want to know anything about the internal witness of the Holy Ghost — indeed, as fleshly people, cannot know and who in their blindness would consider it as foolishness (1 Cor 2:14).[4]

Our answer is this: We also teach, and every true Lutheran experiences in his heart how the Holy Ghost gives witness to the believers' spirit that they are God's children; and how they carry in their hearts the Holy Ghost as a pledge of their state of grace and are sealed in the same, and how he in them calls out the sweet *Abba* (Rom 8:15–16; 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13–14).

It is only this that we rebuke in the Methodistic way of teaching, that they insist a person dare not ground his faith on God's ordained external means of grace and pledge; rather that he must turn away from the dead letters and signs, strive to attain the internal witness and should by no means believe that his sins are forgiven until he feels the internal consolation and comforting power of the Holy Ghost; in short, until he has experienced a definite assurance and has been overcome by the sweetest joy.

We reject this method of conversion as unscriptural, for primarily it attacks at the root the doctrine of justification, which is an act in heaven, and second, it leads to a miserable Christian faith.

For first, the experience and the sweet assurance of grace does not precede faith, rather it follows faith; it is not justification itself, rather a fruit of it (Rom 5:1–2); and then the witness of the Holy Ghost is not always felt in the same degree by believers.

Indeed, there will be times of temptation when this witness will seemingly withdraw into the deep recesses of the heart, that it appears to fall silent, and that only a secret sigh for grace remains and almost nothing is felt but the condemning of the heart (1 Jn 3:20).

Many examples for this are presented in the book of Job and the Psalms, wherein is shown the changing state of the soul of God's pardoned children, how these sometimes stand in the sweetest feeling of comfort, then at times in utter insensitivity, all written in us by the pencil of the Holy Spirit.

That the witness of the Holy Ghost is present is therefore not to be judged merely according to our feelings, rather and above all according to our faith in the word of grace.

Therefore, if people are taught to trust in the changeable feelings of their own heart and not in the changeless heart

1. [Walther's note] Let us impute it to the Methodists' specific ignorance, so well documented in almost all the publications of these apologetes, that Mr. Mulfinger thus summarizes the Lutheran doctrine: "Among them it is merely necessary that a person feel repentance and sorrow for his sins when he goes to confession, including the intention to improve, and as soon as the priest has spoken some words he is considered to be free of all guilt. . . . If he sins again, he need only make use of the same medicine." Mr. M. should be ashamed to have such lies printed about the Lutheran Church, or for Mr. N. to pick up the same. What kind of description will these gentlemen give their listeners in private about the Lutheran Church and her doctrine?
2. [Walther's note] Let this be understood: We most certainly do not want to deny that the Holy Spirit also carries out his work amongst the Methodists. Methodists do not only preach Methodism. And wherever they truly preach God's word, it will not return to them void, rather it will fulfill that for which God sent it (Is 55:11). To speak against the true effects of the divine grace of the Holy Ghost, which also among them will flow out of the word and be in accordance with the word, that we would regard as blasphemy. We are fighting Methodism, not against Methodists; God has his seed also among them.
3. BWV 155, *Mein Gott, wie lang, ach lange?* Translation credit: http://www.uvm.edu/~classics/faculty/bach/BWV155.html
4. [Walther's note] In this way the above-mentioned enthusiast Weigel defamed the Lutheran Church. In his *Golden Grip*, page 75, he writes: "The opponents (the Lutherans) deny the inner witness of the Holy Ghost or the anointing in us all." The Wittenberg theologian N. Hunnius responds to this: "Who has ever heard such a thing in our churches, that we reject the internal witness of the Holy Ghost, or that we do not acknowledge that through faith Christ the Lord lives in us and must destroy the work of the devil? He (Weigel) in fact does this by rejecting the outward witness out of which the internal grows and arises. For it comes out of the hearing of the divine word, Rom 10:18, not from God speaking without means directly to the heart (according to Weigel's explanation)" (see Hunnius's *Reflection of Weigel's Theology*, Wittenberg, 1622, page 213).

of their dear Father in Christ, that is, not in the mere word of the gospel and his sure signs, the holy sacraments, then you foist upon the souls a false ground on which their faith rests and you turn the fruit of justification into its foundation. You plunge those so taught into the danger of making their feelings their savior, or to pretend that they constantly feel the state of grace, or, when God is hidden in the heart, to be despondent and discouraged.

On this important subject, which shines as a great light over all of the neo-Christianity of Methodism, but also on many pseudo-Lutherans, Protestants, and other sects, we will cite some wonderful witnesses of experienced men for the earnest consideration of the Christian reader.

In the Formula of Concord we read:

> For concerning the presence, operation, and gifts of the Holy Ghost we should not and cannot always judge *ex sensu* [from feeling], as to how and when they are experienced in the heart; but because they are often covered and occur in great weakness, we should be certain from, and according to, the promise, that the word of God preached and heard is [truly] an office and work of the Holy Ghost, by which he is certainly efficacious and works in our hearts (FC SD II; *Triglot,* 903).

Luther:

> God forgives sins in two ways: secretly, so that we do not feel it. Just as he attributes to and retains the guilt of many persons which people do not feel or know of. Second, openly, and that we are aware of it, just as he attributes guilt to some, so that they feel it, for example, by punishment and a terrified conscience. The first forgiveness is always necessary. The second is necessary occasionally, so that a person may not lose heart . . . . The first is for us bitter and grievous, however it is the most noble and the best of all. The other is lighter, but the lesser. Both were shown to Mary Magdalene by the Lord. The first, when he turned his back to her and spoke to Simon, "Many sins are forgiven her." Yet she did not have peace. The other, when he turned to her and said, "Your sins are forgiven; go in peace." Now she was at peace. Thus, the first purifies; the second gives peace. The first kind works and brings; the other calms and receives. And there is an immeasurable difference between the two. The first is purely in faith and merits much. The other is in our feeling and receives payment. The first is mostly for the high and mighty; the second is mainly for the weak and those who need to be raised up (on Luke 7:47–50).

Scriver:

> Here a grieving heart might want to say: I do not feel the witness of the Holy Ghost within me, I know nothing of his internal call, of his comfort, peace, and joy. For the most part I feel in my soul real terror and fear. Sometimes, not even one passage of scripture comes to mind in times of trouble. Or when one does come to mind or is presented by others, I don't seem truly to receive any strength from it. It doesn't move my heart. I pray with heavy devotion and find no sweetness within it, and so on.
>
> I answer: One must not judge this very important and comforting matter according to feeling and experience, but rather according to the word of God. It teaches with clear passages that believers' hearts are temples of the Holy Ghost; that he lives in them; that his Spirit gives to their spirit that he is their comforter and helper who remains with them forever. And it does not follow: I do not feel any peace, no joy in me, therefore the Holy Ghost and the kingdom of God is not in me. I do not sense the witness of the Holy Ghost and his comfort, rather the roar and threat of the infernal murderous spirit, therefore my heart is incapable of such witness. I can't believe that I am a child of God, therefore I am not. This, I say, does not follow; just as the following is not true: The tree does not green or bloom in winter, it has no sap, thus it has died off. As long as there is in a person the smallest and faintest sigh for God, the Spirit of God has not forsaken him. The yearning of the soul for God's grace has its source from the Holy Ghost (see *The Soul's Treasure*, 11.12).

Heinrich Mueller:

> Even though you do not feel the joyous motion of the Holy Ghost, do not be grieved. This feeling is not necessary for salvation. Christ says, "He who believes, will be saved" (Mk 16:16). But now faith is grounded not on feeling, rather on the promise of God. Yes, this is faith's greatest power, when without and against all feeling it still clings firmly to God's promise, as it is written of Abraham, Romans 4:18, that he without, indeed against all hope, kept hoping. And for that reason God sometimes withdraws his sweet comfort, that he tests the faith, whether it will cling firmly to his word (*Heavenly Kiss of Love*, 13.59).

Albrecht Bengel:

> The insistence on feeling assured of one's justification can first confound and discourage honest souls and then drive impure souls to an arbitrary *Kakozelei* [mimicry]. No greater harm can be done than to deny a soul's justification just because it is unable fully to proclaim its own certainty (*Sketch of the Brethren's Church*, 478).

D. Burk:

> We must first learn to trust God, afterwards we experience; first we take the food in our mouth, then we enjoy it with a good appetite. Otherwise it comes out all by itself. But afterwards God gives for enjoyment and we trust now so much more. The reason, however, why at times some impure souls draw this important conclusion too soon (that they have forgiveness) is this: by this strong insistence on feeling assured it happens that he who thinks he has it all then considers it is his in any case,

looks upon as his own and succumbs to false serenity (see the book on Justification [par.] 13.14).

Not even the witness [of the Holy Spirit] is a constant reality. The evidence of a matter is not for a long period, rather for the time when people begin to doubt or deny it (Ibid. [par.] 30).

To be continued . . .

FYI: Kieschnick Compliments *Higher Things*

"As you prepare for the *Higher Things* conference in July, 2008, I would like to take this time to express to you how important your work is in spreading the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to the world . . . .Please be assured that all of those gathered will be in my special thoughts and prayers." So goes part of the 19 May 2008 letter by Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (LCMS) President Kieschnick to Rev. William Cwirla. Pr. Cwirla invited LCMS President Kieschnick to attend the "Amen" *Higher Things* St. Louis conference, but he could not attend due to prior commitments. You can check out the full letter at higherthings.org. And while you are there you might want to make plans to attend one of the *HT* conferences in 2009 at Grand Rapids and San Antonio. Go to higherthings.org for more details.

"Out, Damn'd Spot! Out, I Say!"

While we are at it, Pastor Cwirla preached this fine sermon at the Higher Things "Amen" conferences in St. Louis and Irvine.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates (Rev 22:14).

In Nomine Iesu

There is a famous scene in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Perhaps some of you have learned it; I did when I was in high school. Lady Macbeth is racked with guilt over the bloody murders she and her husband have committed. She roams through the halls of the castle in her sleep late at night, desperately wringing her hands, trying to wash away the bloody evidence that tortures her conscience to the point of madness. "Out, damn'd spot! Out, I say!" But the spot just won't disappear. "Who would have thought the old man to have so much blood in him," she cries, scrubbing her hands. She can smell the blood on her hands. "All the perfumes in Arabia will not sweeten this little hand."

Sin has left its mark on you — on your soul, your body, your mind, your psyche, your robes. The damned spot of Adam, the original sin and the origin of all sins — your lies, your immoralities, your blasphemies, your idolatries, your greed, your coveting, your murders, your disobedience, insolence, arrogance, hatred — there is no covering them up. They have all left a mark on you. You have blood on your hands. You search in this world for something that will wash that "damn'd spot" of sin away: drugs, alcohol, religion. You discover the terrible truth of Lady Macbeth. That damn'd spot doesn't go away, no matter how hard you try. Your prayers and pieties won't do it. Your guilt and shame won't wash it away. The smell of sin is on you and all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten it. And then you hear Jesus say, "I am coming soon, bringing my recompense to reward everyone for what he has done." So now what?

You need to wash, and I don't mean clean up your act. You need to be cleansed, and like Lady Macbeth, you can't do it for yourself. All you can do is wring your hands in madness. But there is a detergent for the damn'd spot of sin: the blood of the Lamb, the blood poured out for you on a cross, the blood poured out on you in your baptism. Though your sins be as scarlet, this blood of the Lamb will make them white as snow.

"Blessed are those who wash their robes." Blessed are you baptized, believing one. The gates of the heavenly city lie open to you. The Tree of Life is waiting for you to pluck its life-bearing fruit. Earlier, John saw the worshippers of heaven, a congregation no ushering crew in the world could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language. He asked one of the twenty-four elders, "Who are these in white robes and where did they come from?" The elder said this: "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Who would have thought that the Lamb would have so much blood in him? And such a blood it is that can cleanse the spot of sin and wash it away forever. Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

Have you ever wondered where your sins go when they are washed away? It all has to go somewhere, right? Ever wonder where the drain goes, where the sewer pipe ends? It goes out, away, far away, deep into the earth, outside the city. There is no place for sin in the heavenly city of God.

Outside the city gates is the garbage dump, the septic tank, the cesspool, the place where the dogs hang out, not referring to the likes of that poor Canaanite woman with her puppy-dog faith you have heard of, but those who revel in the stale stench of humanity gone bad: the sorcerers and the sexually immoral, the murderers and idolaters, and all who practice and delight in falsehood and lies. Outside the city gates would be our destiny too, were it not for Jesus.

But he was crucified outside the city bearing your sins on the garbage heap called Calvary. Jesus was made sin for us.

He absorbed the damned, indelible spot of fallen humanity — Adam's sin and yours — and washed it all away in the blood and water that flowed from his side and ran down the wood of the cross to the cursed, weedy soil, trickling down into the deepest depths of hell, where they belong.

If you wish to keep company with your sin, if you wish to commune in your corruption, if you wish to take delight in the evil you have done, then you must go outside the gates of God's city, to the dogs. You must go to hell. But that is not what Jesus has in mind for you. He died and rose so that you would have a rather different outcome.

The Spirit and the church say "Come." You are invited. Come. Come, you sinners, poor, broken, needy. Come, young and old, torn by guilt and shame. There is living water to refresh you here, cleansing blood to wash away that damned spot. Flush it down the drain of your baptism together with the old Adam and all his sinful desires and deeds. Let Jesus deal with it. He already has. Come, drink of that stream of forgiveness that flows from his cross to you. Come to the church, God's inn of mercy. Come to the ministry of forgiveness and healing, to your fellow priests clothed in Christ. Come, sons and daughters of Adam, no matter how great your sin, no matter how deep the stain. It is all washed away by the slain Lamb who lives and reigns.

"Yes, I am coming soon." Jesus' last word to his church. "I am coming soon." To save you. To raise you. To welcome you. To claim you.

And the church, washed in the blood of the Lamb, responds with that little Hebrew word that encapsulates all of faith: Amen. "Come, Lord Jesus."

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you, his saints. Amen.

The Holy Spirit Puts Round Pegs in Square Holes: Not a Good Fit

It is certainly not uncommon for strife to exist between pastor and people. Many factors can be involved, ranging from worship style and format to the number of times a particular shut-in member gets a home visit. Pastoral decisions regarding cohabitating couples seem to be a dangerous land mine these days. These problems are often great opportunities for communication to increase and reconciliation to flourish between the undershepherd and the flock entrusted to him. God loves reconciliation; that is why he sent Jesus.

Occasionally the strife between pastor and people escalates. Different people react in different ways. Some get defensive while others go on the offensive. Pastors may "hole up" in their home or office or demand to be respected. People may stay away from the divine service and withhold their offerings or begin a cycle of gossip to "drum up support." Mature church leaders may be called upon to help resolve the conflict in a God-pleasing way. In the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (LCMS) this may lead to a contact with the circuit counselor or district president, or in rare instances a request for "formal reconciliation." A person removed from the emotions of the issue can often provide suggestions or advice to help bring about reconciliation, even in the most difficult and stressful situations. When this happens, God be praised!

Sadly, a different trend seems to be on the rise in much of the Protestant community, especially in the LCMS. Rather than work through the sometimes long and difficult process of reconciliation, people long for a quicker fix. Rather than ask the Lord of the Harvest to provide a call for a pastor to a different part of the Kingdom, and in the meantime work toward reconciliation, a new synergism rears its ugly head. A new Christianity mixed and mingled with business methods and models carries the day. The only hope is pastoral resignation and a generous severance package. Only in this way can both pastor and people "win." Only in this way can the healing process truly begin so that the congregation may begin a new search for a "more acceptable" replacement.

Several elected leaders in the LCMS have told me that we need to acknowledge and admit that there are times when pastor and people are simply "not a good fit." Rather than reconciliation, the goal must be to have the pastor leave. This is a doctrinal sticky wicket. If God the Holy Spirit is the one who placed the man there through the congregation's call, did the Holy Spirit make a mistake? Most LCMS congregations have bylaws that allow for only three reasons to remove a pastor: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous lifestyle, willful neglect or inability to perform the duties of the office. When the issues do not rise to the level of removal, resignation and severance seems like a good option. But is it? Do Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions encourage this approach? Or is the business model the answer?

When Jeremiah's ministry "turned sour" and he was threatened with death (Jeremiah 26), how do you think he would have reacted to the offer of a "generous severance package"? When Jeremiah's "offensive" words brought him imprisonment and "new vision" from the bottom of a cistern (Jeremiah 37 and 38), do you think he would have relished the prospect of a win-win solution? I think not. Rather, he would have been reminded of God's great promise: "Whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord" (Jer 1:7–8).

As a brother pastor, I offer this unsolicited advice to anyone who finds himself in this type of strife and conflict. Remember that God is the one who called and placed you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. If you have erred, be an example to the flock and confess your sin; model true reconciliation to your people. Be faithful; even in the midst of a difficult situation continue to work hard, visiting and teaching and studying and preaching. If someone offers you the "opportunity" to resign and receive a severance package, be skeptical. The words "I am from the IRS and I am here to help" come to mind. If you truly believe that it would be

better for you to serve in a different parish, pray to the Lord of the church and ask the appropriate church officials to circulate your name. Then use the time wisely for reconciliation and trust God's timetable. Finally, if people persist in their ungodly demands for resignation, in this current church climate you may be wise to adopt a page from the business model for yourself: lawyer up.

Clint K. Poppe
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Lincoln, NE

Brief articles may be submitted for consideration in Logia Forum by sending them to Rev. Michael Albrecht, 460 W. Annapolis St., West St. Paul, MN 55118. When possible, please e-mail your work to us in Microsoft Word (Doc) or RTF formats to malbrecht@saintjameslutheran.com Because of the large number of unsolicited materials received, we regret that we cannot publish them all or notify authors in advance of their publication.

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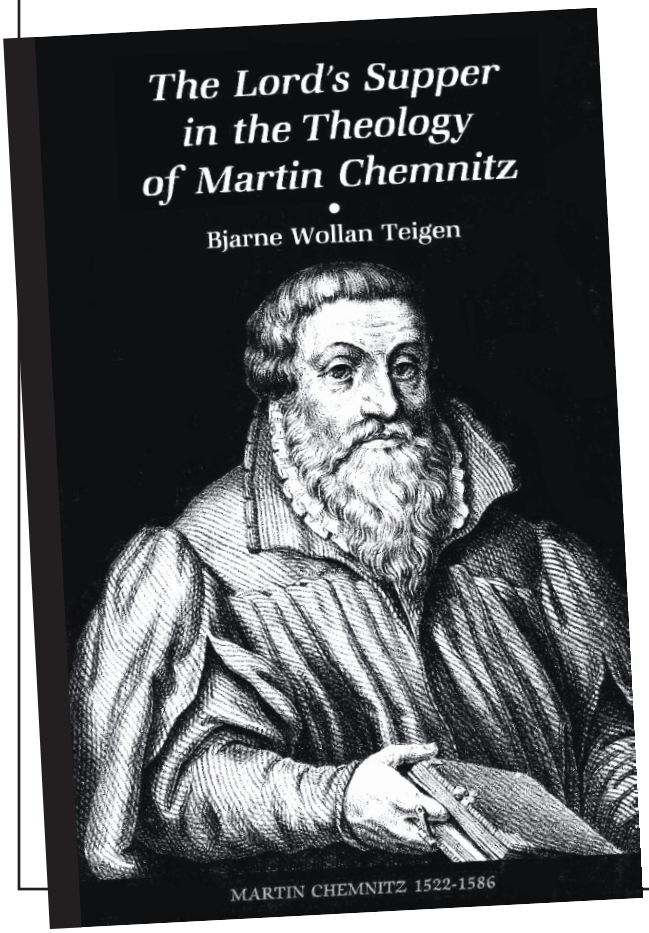

Shortly before Bjarne Teigen's death, his children suggested that his book be republished on the Internet; he was able to conceptualize the process and understood that by this means his book might reach scholars worldwide at low cost. When he gave his consent, the process of having *The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz* republished electronically was begun. The cost of the project was kept low only because of *Logia's* generous offer to place the book on its website.

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From the cover art:

Shown are Luther at the Table head (right), with Phillip Melanchthon to his left and others including Veit Dietrich and John Forster, both of whom also recorded Luther's conversations.

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