

# LOGIA

A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY



## LUTHERANISM IN EUROPE

EPIPHANY 2011

VOLUME XX, NUMBER 1



## εἴ τις λαλεῖ, ὡς λόγια θεοῦ

**LOGIA** is a journal of Lutheran theology. As such it publishes articles on exegetical, historical, systematic, and liturgical theology that promote the orthodox theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. We cling to God's divinely instituted marks of the church: the gospel, preached purely in all its articles, and the sacraments, administered according to Christ's institution. This name expresses what this journal wants to be. In Greek, ΛΟΓΙΑ functions either as an adjective meaning "eloquent," "learned," or "cultured," or as a plural noun meaning "divine revelations," "words," or "messages." The word is found in 1 Peter 4:11, Acts 7:38, and Romans 3:2. Its compound forms include ὁμολογία (confession), ἀπολογία (defense), and ἀναλογία (right relationship). Each of these concepts and all of them together express the purpose and method of this journal. *LOGIA* considers itself a *free conference in print* and is committed to providing an independent theological forum normed by the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. At the heart of our journal we want our readers to find a love for the sacred Scriptures as the very Word of God, not merely as rule and norm, but especially as Spirit, truth, and life 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.

**Editorial & Correspondence:** Michael Albrecht and Carl Roth. [senioreditor@logia.org](mailto:senioreditor@logia.org) Unsolicited material is welcome. All submissions must be accompanied by a 300-word or less abstract of the article. See "A Call for Manuscripts" for further information. Letters selected for publication are subject to editorial modification, must be typed or computer printed, and must contain the writer's name and complete address.

**Book Review:** John T. Pless and John Sias. [bookreviews@logia.org](mailto:bookreviews@logia.org) All books received will be listed.

**LOGIA Forum:** Michael Albrecht. [forum@logia.org](mailto:forum@logia.org)

**Blogia:** (LOGIA's blog) Derek Roberts. [blogia@logia.org](mailto:blogia@logia.org)

**Advertising:** LOGIA Advertising Office, 15145 369th Ave. Chelsea SD 57465. [advertising@logia.org](mailto:advertising@logia.org) Advertising rates and specifications are available upon request. Policy statement: LOGIA reserves the right to refuse ads from organizations or individuals whose theological position or churchly demeanor runs counter to the mission of LOGIA to provide an independent theological forum normed by the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

**Subscriptions:** [subscriptions@logia.org](mailto:subscriptions@logia.org) U.S.A.: one year (four issues), \$30; two years (eight issues), \$56. **Canada and Mexico:** one year, \$37; two years, \$70. **International:** one year, \$55. All funds in U.S. currency only. Canadian orders Visa or MC only.

Copyright © 2011. The Luther Academy. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without written permission.

LOGIA (ISSN #1064-0398) is published quarterly by the Luther Academy, 9228 Lavant Drive, St. Louis, MO 63126. Non-profit postage paid (permit #4) at Northville, SD and additional mailing offices.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to LOGIA, PO Box 81, Northville, SD 57465.

**THE COVER ART** is the window in Memorial Church in Speyer, Germany, commemorating the Augsburg Confession of 1530. To the sides are (left) Philipp Melancthon, the confession's author, and (right) Chancellor Christian Beyer, who read the confession at the imperial diet.

It was after the Diet of Speyer in 1529 that those who were protesting (chiefly the politics of the Holy Roman Empire) became known as "Protestants." However, the Augsburg Confession has always remained a Lutheran Confession.

LOGIA is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, published by the  
*American Theological Library Association*  
250 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 1600, Chicago, IL 60606  
E-mail: [atla@atla.com](mailto:atla@atla.com) ~ [www.atla.com/](http://www.atla.com/)

### FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

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

### HOW TO CONTACT US

for orders, subscriptions, questions, comments

Phone ▲ 605-887-3145

E-mail ▲ [logia2@nvc.net](mailto:logia2@nvc.net)

Secure Website ▲ [www.logia.org](http://www.logia.org)

Mail ▲ PO Box 81, Northville, SD 57465

To order LOGIA CDs or Books, give us your complete name, address, phone number, order, total, and check or credit card number and expiration date (Visa or MasterCard).

## EDITORS

---

### Michael J. Albrecht

#### Senior Editor

Pastor, Saint James Lutheran Church  
West St. Paul, MN  
senioreditor@logia.org

### Carl D. Roth

#### Coordinating Editor

Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Elgin, TX  
senioreditor@logia.org

### John T. Pless

#### Book Review Editor

Professor, Concordia Theological  
Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN  
bookreviews@logia.org

### Derek Roberts

#### Web and Blog Editor

Pastor, First Lutheran Church  
Knoxville, TN  
blogia@logia.org

### John W. Sias

#### Associate Book Review Editor

Pastor, Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church  
Colstrip, MT  
bookreviews@logia.org

### William M. Cwirla

#### LOGIA Forum Co-Editor

Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church  
Hacienda Heights, CA  
forum@logia.org

### Brent Kuhlman

#### LOGIA Forum Co-Editor

Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church  
Murdock, NE  
forum@logia.org

### Richard A. Lammert

#### Copy Editor

Concordia Theological Seminary  
Fort Wayne, IN  
lammert@ctsfw.edu

### James M. Braun

#### Editorial Associate

Pastor, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Yelm, WA  
jaymbee@mac.com

### Charles Cortright

#### Editorial Associate

Associate Professor, Wisconsin Lutheran  
College, Milwaukee, WI  
charles.cortright@wlc.edu

### Paul Lehninger

#### Editorial Associate

Professor, Wisconsin Lutheran College  
Milwaukee, WI  
paul.lehninger@wlc.edu

### Dennis Marzolf

#### Editorial Associate

Professor, Bethany Lutheran College  
Mankato, MN  
dbklmrz@hickorytech.net

### Mark Mattes

#### Editorial Associate

Professor of Philosophy and Religion  
Grand View University, Des Moines, IA  
mmattes@gvc.edu

### Aaron Moldenhauer

#### Editorial Associate

Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church Beecher, IL  
moldenhaueram@yahoo.com

### Martin R. Noland

#### Editorial Associate

Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church  
Evansville, IN  
mnoland@insightbb.com

### Thomas L. Rank

#### Editorial Associate

Pastor, Scarville and Center Lutheran  
Churches, Scarville, IA  
thomrank@wctatel.net

### Erling Teigen, Editorial Advisor

Professor, Bethany Lutheran College  
Mankato, MN  
eteigen@charter.net

Visit us online at [www.logia.org](http://www.logia.org)

## CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

---

### Joel A. Brondos

St. Paul Lutheran Church, Brookfield, IL

### Albert B. Collver III

Director of Church Relations  
Assistant to LCMS President  
St. Louis, MO

### Burnell F. Eckardt Jr.

Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church  
Kewanee, IL

### Charles Evanson

Professor, Seminary for Evangelical  
Theology, Klaipeda, Lithuania

### Ronald Feuerhahn

Professor Emeritus, Concordia Seminary  
St. Louis, MO

### Lowell Green

Professor, State University of New York  
at Buffalo, NY

### Paul Grime

Professor, Concordia Theological Seminary  
Fort Wayne, IN

### Kenneth Hagen

Professor Emeritus, Marquette University  
Lake Mills, WI

### Matthew Harrison

President LCMS, St. Louis, MO

### Steven Hein

Director, Concordia Institute  
for Christian Studies  
Colorado Springs, CO

### Horace Hummel

Professor Emeritus, Concordia Seminary  
St. Louis, MO

### Arthur Just

Professor, Concordia Theological Seminary  
Fort Wayne, IN

### John Kleinig

Professor, Australian Lutheran College  
North Adelaide South Australia, Australia

### Arnold J. Koelpin

Professor, Martin Luther College  
New Ulm, MN

### Gerald Krispin

President, Concordia College  
Edmonton, AB, Canada

### Alan Ludwig

Professor, Lutheran Theological Seminary  
Novosibirsk, Russia

### Cameron MacKenzie

Professor, Concordia Theological Seminary  
Fort Wayne, IN

### Gottfried Martens

Pastor, St. Mary's Lutheran Church  
Berlin, Germany

### Paul McCain

Publisher, Concordia Publishing House  
St. Louis, MO

### Mark D. Menacher

Pastor, St. Luke's Lutheran Church  
La Mesa, CA

### Scott Murray

Fifth Vice-President LCMS  
Pastor, Memorial Lutheran Church  
Houston, TX

### Norman E. Nagel

Professor Emeritus, Concordia Seminary  
St. Louis, MO

### James A. Nestingen

Professor Emeritus, Luther Seminary  
St. Paul, MN

### Oliver Olson

Retired Associate Professor  
Marquette University  
Minneapolis, MN

### Wilhelm Petersen

President Emeritus, Bethany Lutheran  
Seminary, Mankato, MN

### Andrew Pfeiffer

Professor, Australian Lutheran College  
North Adelaide South Australia, Australia

### Roger D. Pittelko

President and Bishop Emeritus,  
English District, LCMS

### Daniel Preus

Fourth Vice President LCMS  
Director, Luther Academy  
St. Louis, MO

### Clarence Priebbenow

Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church  
Oakey Queensland, Australia

### Joseph Randrianasolo

Professor, Sekoly Ambony Loterana  
momba ny Teolojia  
Fianaranatsoa, Madagascar

### Richard Resch

Kantor and Professor of Church Music  
Concordia Theological Seminary  
Fort Wayne, IN

### David P. Scaer

Professor, Concordia Theological Seminary  
Fort Wayne, IN

### Robert Schaibley

Pastor, Shepherd of the Springs Lutheran  
Church, Colorado Springs, CO

### Jobst Schöne

Bishop Emeritus, Selbständige  
Evangelische Lutherische Kirche, Germany

### Bruce Schuchard

Professor, Concordia Seminary  
St. Louis, MO

### Harold Senkbeil

Executive Director for Spiritual Care  
Doxology (<http://doxology.us/>)  
Waukesha, WI

### Fredrik Sidenvall

Pastor, Frillesås, Church of Sweden

### Carl P. E. Springer

Professor, Southern Illinois University  
Edwardsville, IL

### John Stephenson

Professor, Concordia Seminary  
St. Catharines, ON, Canada

### Erling Teigen

Professor, Bethany Lutheran College  
Mankato, MN

### Jon D. Vieker

Assistant Director, LCMS Commission  
on Worship, St. Louis, MO

### David Jay Webber

Pastor, Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Scottsdale, AZ

### Wilhelm Weber

Bishop, Lutheran Church South Africa  
Pretoria, South Africa

### William C. Weinrich

Rector, Luther Academy  
Riga, Latvia

### Armin Wenz

Pastor, St. John Lutheran Church  
Oberursel, Germany

### Robert Zagore

Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church  
Traverse City, MI

## SUPPORT STAFF

---

### Denise Melius

Subscriptions and Customer Service  
Northville, SD  
customerwervice@logia.org

### Sarah Ludwig Rausch

Advertising, Chelsea, SD  
advertising@logia.org

### Patricia Ludwig, Layout

College Place, WA  
pludwig0253@charter.net

### Mark A. Loest, Cover Art, Pastor,

Immanuel Luth. Ch., Saginaw, MI  
pastorloest@frankentrost.org

### Trina Tschappat, Proofreading

Westport, SD  
trina\_tschappat@yahoo.com

### James Wilson, Cartoonist

Pastor, Resurrection Lutheran Church  
North Bend, OR  
coastscribbler@verizon.net

### Dean Bell, LOGIA Audio Reviews

Pastor, First English Luth. Ch. Foston, MN  
revbell@loretel.net

# LOGIA

## A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

EPIPHANY 2011

VOLUME XX, NUMBER 1

### CONTENTS

#### ARTICLES

<i>Does Luther Have a Future in Germany?</i> Jobst Schöne .....	5
<i>The Leuenberg “Concord”</i> Jobst Schöne .....	13
<i>Aspects of Lutheran Identity: A Confessional Perspective</i> Werner Klän, Trans. Frederick S. Gardiner .....	23
<i>Controversial Church Music—Then and Now</i> Robert Mayes .....	33

#### REVIEWS

.....	45
<i>Martin Luther’s Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation.</i> By Oswald Bayer. Review by Michael Larson	
<i>Desire, Gift, and Recognition: Christology and Postmodern Philosophy.</i> By Jan-Olav Henriksen. Review by Mark Mattes	
<i>Embodied Faith: Reflections on a Materialist Spirituality.</i> By Ola Tjørhom. Review by Mark Mattes	
<i>Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters.</i> Edited by Donald K. McKim. Review by Jacob Corzine	
<i>Theologie und Gebet bei Luther: Untersuchungen zur Psalmenvorlesung 1532–1535.</i> By Matthias Mikoteit. Review by Holger Sonntag	
<i>Christliche Gebet für alle Not Vnd Stende der Gantzen Christenheit (1567).</i> By Johann Habermann. Review by Armin Wenz	

#### BRIEFLY NOTED

#### LOGIA FORUM

.....	55
The Hour of the SELK • A Sermon on the Holy Trinity • What Is the ELFK?	
Love the Languages as You Love the Gospel! • Dare to Be Lutheran?	
Standing on Scripture! • Dollars and Seats, Reverend!	
Our Savior in a Manger Lay • Teach Me to Wither with Joy	

#### ALSO THIS ISSUE

<i>Inklings</i> by Jim Wilson .....	32
<i>Call for Manuscripts</i> .....	44



Brick by brick  
Homes are built. Hope is restored.



Be a part of Building Homes and Hope in Haiti

Visit [www.lcms.org/bhhh](http://www.lcms.org/bhhh) • Call 800-248-1930, ext. 1380

# Does Luther Have a Future in Germany?

JOBST SCHÖNE



**I**F YOU GIVE THIS QUESTION SOME THOUGHT, you will realize how difficult it is to give a reliable answer. We live in a constantly changing world. Beyond that, only a real prophet could make an accurate prognosis of Luther's future in Germany—and I am no prophet. Under these circumstances I can only attempt to analyze the situation in which we find ourselves and draw some conclusions. In the end I will leave the prognosis more or less to you, and you may determine for yourself what to make of my presentation. At any rate it will look more like a six-month weather forecast (that is, never accurate) than a solid statement. Right now nobody knows what will happen in the coming years and decades and how our churches will cope with and respond to the challenges before them.

Before we go into any details concerning the situation in Germany, we should clarify what sort of “Luther” we have in mind and are discussing.

## WHAT “LUTHER” DO WE HAVE IN MIND?

Since the time of the Reformation there has been considerable change in the picture that people hold of Luther, the conception of what Lutheranism is all about, and the expectations of what to gain from the Reformation. In every age the *Zeitgeist* (a loanword in English, denoting the thought and feeling specific to a certain generation or period) has deeply influenced how Luther was accepted and adopted and how people wanted to see him. People always like to project their own ideas on a certain figure in history. Luther is one example. People wish him and his heritage to be the way they want. Rarely has there been a completely objective and impartial acceptance of Luther and his legacy. This fact is well-documented and demonstrated in the exhibition found today in the Luther House in Wittenberg, the former Augustinian monastery in which Luther lived for many years. Simply compare the pictures, portraits, and monuments of Luther from various periods, and you will notice that many of them portray not only Luther, but also the period when the display was constructed along with its feelings and conceptions of Luther. In some instances this is reflected in a quite revealing manner.

You can indeed make use of Luther in many different ways. You can consider him a genius, a liberator from the so-called darkness of the Middle Ages, a destroyer or a renovator of the church, a progressive or a conservative, a revolutionary, a national hero, the founder of a national church or concerned about the church catholic, a saint or a demon, an evil spirit or the savior of the church. Those who admire him use him for their own purposes just as those who hate him or simply cannot get out of his way. The Humanists and the Enthusiasts did so in the sixteenth century, the Pietists and the Enlighteners did so in the seventeenth century, the liberal theologians and the Nationalists did so in the nineteenth century, the Nazis and even the Communists did so in the twentieth century, and some silly materialists do so today. After all, Luther is still good for business, promoting tourism and selling souvenirs of all kinds, down to Luther-candies, Luther-cake, Luther-beer, and whatever else you can find in Wittenberg today. Ironically, while Luther's hometown no longer knows much of his teaching, it still celebrates his marriage by a public parade in historic costumes every year.

The Luther, however, on whom we are concentrating and whose future we are contemplating is not the sort of Luther good for tourists, good for business, or good for promoting all kinds of ideas. He is not the one placed on monuments but otherwise forgotten. Luther himself wanted to be nothing but a teacher of the church (catholic), a rediscoverer and confessor of the pure doctrine of the gospel. And that is how the church that accepted his reformation understood him until the end of the seventeenth century. Hermann Sasse, the well-known Lutheran theologian of Erlangen University and later Australia, tells us: “Then came the time when the nature of the doctrine of the gospel along with the contents of the church's doctrine were no longer understood, and false interpretations of the Reformation began.”<sup>1</sup> Sasse makes the following point regarding the doctrine of the Eucharist (but it is true for all other Lutheran doctrines as well):

If it is no longer confessed but only presented as an historic antiquity . . . it is going to die. . . . In the very moment when the church's doctrine disappears, the veneration of Luther [as a person] begins. . . . Luther scholars, replacing

---

JOBST SCHÖNE is Bishop Emeritus, Selbständige Evangelische-Lutherische Kirche (SELK) in Germany. This essay was presented at the Theological Symposium of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in October 2007.

---

1. Hermann Sasse, *Was heißt lutherisch?* (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1934), 65.

the guardians of Lutheran doctrine, will now collect his relics and exhibit them. . . . Processions of pilgrims . . . will survey them with the same reverence as the pilgrims of old viewed the collection of relics Frederic the Wise [Luther's Prince Elector] had gathered. . . . Only indulgences can no longer be earned, not because Luther has done away with them, but more for the reason Claus Harms [a Lutheran pastor and theologian at the beginning of the nineteenth century] . . . has given: "The forgiveness of sins cost money in the sixteenth century; in the nineteenth century you get it for nothing as you help yourself to it."<sup>2</sup>

When we ask if Luther has a future in Germany, we ask about Luther the teacher of the church; we ask about Lutheran doctrine and confession. Sasse observes:

As teacher of the church he [Luther] stepped back behind his doctrine. For by this a true teacher of the church gives proof of his mission, just as a genuine apostle and prophet: that he is only a mediator of a doctrine which is not his own . . . *Ist doch die leer nit meyn*, "the doctrine is not mine" (Luther, *Eine treue Vermahnung . . . sich zu hüten vor Aufruhr . . .*, 1522; WA 8: 685.6). Luther is protesting against those who label his followers by his name, which grew into a custom. That makes the difference between a reformer and the founder of a sect.<sup>3</sup>

Luther saw himself as dispensable. And in fact

in the history of the Reformation in Germany the person of Luther steps rather soon into the background. By far, Luther's person did not play a role in the years after 1530 as Calvin's person did until the end of his life.<sup>4</sup>

### HAS LUTHER INFLUENCED GERMANY AND HOW SO?

This is the next question to address. Overseas tourists visiting Germany are often deeply disappointed. They expect a country full of Lutherans. They think of Germans as Lutherans by nature—if not all, at least a majority. It is quite normal to expect nothing but Lutherans in the motherland of the Reformation. The reality is quite different.

Today thirty-one percent of the German population holds membership in one of the twenty-three Protestant Territorial (State-related) Churches (Landeskirchen). All these churches are tied together in one organization by the name EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland) and have full church fellowship with and among each other. Another thirty-two percent of the German population is Roman Catholic. And then follows the frightening discovery that thirty-one percent (almost one-

third!) have no church affiliation of any kind. Only two percent belong to other smaller Christian denominations (Orthodox, Baptist, Methodist, and so forth). Muslims make up four percent of the population.

---

### *Individualism and the privatization of the Christian faith make doctrinal differences obsolete.*

---

Among the Protestants average church attendance on a typical Sunday is down to less than four percent of all members. The Roman Catholics are somewhat better off. Germany may be seen as a mission field. It used to be different, but since the age of Enlightenment and Rationalism there has been a constant turn away from the church. There have been short-lived interruptions to this departure, such as the Awakening at the beginning of the nineteenth century or the influence of political catastrophes like World Wars I and II. But in recent decades this development has reached stunning dimensions, due to political regimes hostile to Christianity (the Nazi regime and Communism in Eastern Germany) as well as the general secularization of the Western world. Protestant churches in Eastern Germany have lost half a million members only twelve years (1991–2003) after *die Wende*, the political turn-around, while in Western Germany three and a half million members left the church within twenty years (1983–2003). Such rapidly declining membership figures and consequently shrinking financial resources accompany theological weakness and loss of confessional profile. Mainstream Protestantism in Germany is no longer characterized by a Lutheran heritage, but by pluralism and a great variety of opinions, positions, and convictions, often contradicting one another. An official document describing the future prospects of the EKD (edited in 2006 by the Council of the EKD) quite frankly labels this church body as "a church of freedom" and "a church of individuality." It is theologically broad-minded and similar to what the Episcopal Church calls "Anglican comprehensiveness," in which nearly every opinion is accommodated.

Luther's influence in terms of doctrine and church practice, worship and prayer has declined remarkably. However, a good number of local congregations and pastors still hold to the Lutheran Confessions and want to retain their heritage. Yet they have a hard time coping with the widespread atmosphere of tolerance, openness, and indifference towards doctrine and confession. This comes from modern individualism and the privatization of the Christian faith that make doctrinal differences obsolete.

The present-day situation has developed in a history too long to recount in detail in this article. In my view the decline of Lutheranism in Germany has four basic reasons:

2. Hermann Sasse, *Union und Bekenntnis* (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1936), 18.

3. Sasse, *Was heißt lutherisch?*, 67.

4. Sasse, *Was heißt lutherisch?*, 23.



1. The close connection between state and church since the sixteenth century;
2. The Pietist movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries;
3. The impact of the Enlightenment and Rationalism in the eighteenth century;
4. The formation of Union churches in the nineteenth century.

First, the Lutheran reformers in the sixteenth century found themselves confronted with bishops who rejected Lutheran doctrine and refused to ordain Lutheran pastors and care for Lutheran churches. Under these conditions they accepted the secular rulers (electors, princes, and the like) and other secular authorities as “substitute bishops.” These were regarded as pre-eminent members of the church (*membra praecipua ecclesiae*), fit for taking over at least the administration. Thereby the traditional ecclesiastical authorities were replaced by men of political power. This was obviously in contradiction to the reformers’ own conviction (AC xxviii) that there ought to be a separation or at least a clear distinction between state and church, but it seemed inevitable under prevailing conditions. In the end it established state churches on a regional basis. As these secular authorities began to turn away from the faith themselves, this system became intolerable and caused all kinds of problems. This was before the establishment of the modern secular political system that looks on the church as an association of people of a certain conviction, similar to other associations and possessing equal rights. As a result, public opinion saw the church more and more as a part of the state and dominated by the state. Pastors and bishops were seen simply as servants of the state who were paid by the state and were always loyal to the authorities. By state law church affiliation was enforced, along with baptism, confession, attendance at the Eucharist, and so forth. This did not foster a friendly attitude among the people or any greater love for the church, nor did it generate responsibility for the church’s existence. Instead it alienated large parts of the population from the church.

People began to look for their spiritual welfare in private circles, giving rise to the second reason for the decline of Lutheranism in Germany: the Pietist movement, a reaction against the established state church and—at least to some extent—against the official doctrine of the church. There are legitimate questions about the extent of this movement’s influence and its effect on Lutheranism, but there is no doubt that Pietism still has a great impact on church life in Germany today.

Pietism accentuated private piety, seeking out like-minded believers and gathering them in small groups for Bible study and prayer. There was little interest in the traditional Lutheran worship service, doctrine, Confessions, the sacrament, or the ordained ministry, and all the current problems we have with these issues originate from Pietistic influence. Pietism, emphasizing its foremost concern of the “priesthood of all believers,” called for conversion as a spiritual event in a Christian’s life. It accentuated feelings, personal piety, and sanctification over doctrine. Pietism activated Bible study and Bible distribu-

tion, and organized mission work and social work to a previously unknown extent. At the same time it paved the way for ecumenism by seeking out fellow believers more than purity of doctrine. The activity of lay people along with individuality began to shape church life. The traditional Lutheran position was questioned, and Luther’s influence began to fade away.

Third, the spirit of the Enlightenment and Rationalism, overlapping with Pietism, influenced the church and became even more destructive. It undermined the authority of the Scriptures, rejected the doctrine of original sin, replaced biblical anthropology with an optimistic picture of man, and proclaimed a new age of progress. In the end it gave birth to liberal theology, widely characteristic of the nineteenth century.

---

### *Lutheran piety was replaced by Luther monuments.*

---

Fourth, Lutheran churches and Lutheran doctrine were literally destroyed by the formation of Union churches in many of Germany’s territories in the nineteenth century, depriving the Lutheran Confessions of their effect and exclusive right. During this time Lutheran doctrine was replaced by veneration of Luther; Lutheran piety was replaced by Luther monuments.

Today twelve out of twenty-three territorial churches in Germany are Union churches, resulting from the merger of Lutheran and Reformed church bodies. Ten more territorial churches are Lutheran by constitution but tied together with Union churches and Reformed churches as members of the same church body, the EKD. The EKD started out after World War II as a federation of autonomous church bodies but developed into a communion, a church body with full church fellowship among its members. This communion is based on the so-called Leuenberg Concord of 1973, a doctrinal agreement declaring that all former confessional differences are no longer divisive.

Has Luther influenced Germany, and how so? He has indeed, but long past are the times when his influence had great impact. Neither the confessional Awakening in the nineteenth century (the so-called *Neuluthertum*, new Lutheranism) nor the considerable body of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Luther research could stop the decline of Lutheranism.

What is left of Luther’s influence? There is still his ingenious and unequalled translation of the Bible into German, although this is now found alongside numerous other translations. There is still Luther’s Small Catechism, now as before used in numerous congregations. There are still hymns of Luther, Paul Gerhard, and many others in use, disseminating Lutheran doctrine, although contemporary songs are taking over more and more. There are the timeless cantatas and oratorios of Johann

Sebastian Bach attracting the crowds. In some places there is still a divine service following Luther's order. One should not underestimate the influence coming from this heritage. But how much impact it will have in the long run, or what influence will continue to come from it, remains an open question.

### WHAT REPLACED LUTHER?

Two great theologians of striking effectiveness and penetrating power enduring up to our day help answer this question.

The first was a preacher and professor in Berlin in the early nineteenth century by the name of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). Schleiermacher brought the heritage of Pietism and the Enlightenment together and gained the title of “Church Father of the Union Church” (*Kirchenvater der Union*). Fighting the alienation of the people from the church of his time and the secularization of public and private life (by and large the private more than the public life), Schleiermacher believed in privatized religion based on feelings more than doctrine. He appeared to hold a Lutheran position when he described the fundamental difference between Roman Catholics and Protestants in the following way: Roman Catholicism “makes the individual's relation to Christ dependent on his relation to the church,” while Protestantism “makes the individual's relation to the church dependent on his relation to Christ.”<sup>5</sup> This, however, is not Luther's concept.

---

### *Schleiermacher's concept makes the church a merely sociological entity.*

---

Schleiermacher saw the church not as a divine institution, but as a free association of believing individuals for the purpose of serving their religious needs. His concept makes the church a merely sociological entity. This concept and idea (to value the church from a human point of view as composed of individuals joining by free-will agreement to do things together) has prevailed up to the present day in German Protestantism—and I suspect not only in Germany. Schleiermacher felt the tension between individual rights and all-encompassing institutions. He voted for individuality, guided by the principle of freedom and progress originating from the Enlightenment. Throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, many (perhaps most) Protestants followed him and considered freedom, individualism, critical thought, and suspicion of institutional authority to be the chief legacy of the Reformation and a decisive mark of Protestantism. For instance, Ferdinand Christian Baur

(1792–1860), a famous representative of that era of liberal theology, declared Protestantism to be

the principle of subjective freedom, of the freedom of faith and conscience, of the authority of the subject in opposition to the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic conception of the church.<sup>6</sup>

Similar ideas are expressed by Ritschl, A. Harnack, Sohm, Troeltsch, Tillich, and many more.

Schleiermacher's influence did away with most of Luther—or what was left of him. Perhaps the most influential theologian of the nineteenth century, his concept of the church, his accent on the individual, and his endeavor to place feelings above doctrine still dominate in today's Protestantism. It is no accident that the 2006 official statement of the EKD, dealing with perspectives of the Protestant church in the twenty-first century, has been published under the title *Kirche der Freiheit* (“Church of Freedom”), and characterizes this church as a “church of individuality.”

Nevertheless, it was not Schleiermacher alone who shaped nineteenth-century theological thought. There were also Lutherans who stood up and cared for the legacy of the Reformation that they found in Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. Theologians and churchmen like Wilhelm Löhe, August Vilmar, Theodosius Harnack, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (though he was of rather little influence in Germany), Adolf Petri, and Theodor Kliefoth—to mention just a few and the most important—brought about a revival of Lutheranism, a new awareness of the Confessions. Their efforts, though one hundred fifty years old, are not altogether lost. Independent Lutheran churches emerging from the struggle against Unionism and liberal theology still exist. Lutherans worldwide began to take note of each other and developed forms of mutual assistance and cooperation. Luther survived, but so did Zwingli and Calvin, Pietism and Rationalism, not to speak of secularism, indifference, and plain ignorance.

In the twentieth century, after World War I had shaken and undermined the prevailing feeling of security and optimism in Europe, another great theologian entered the stage and soon became famous and influential: Karl Barth (1886–1968). Barth, of Swiss Reformed descent, is known as the father of Dialectic Theology as well as the champion and chief theologian of the *Bekennende Kirche*, the “Confessing Church,” in the Nazi period. He was at the same time an engaged and strong supporter of Unionism and vigorously opposed to Lutheranism. Not only did he reject the Lutheran distinction between law and gospel, he turned it upside-down, altering the gospel into a law by which one can and should govern the state. Consequently he rejected the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms, the two ways of God's ruling. He could not accept the Lutheran concept

---

5. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. and ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 103.

6. Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Ferdinand Christian Baur on the Writing of Church History*, trans. and ed. Peter C. Hodgson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 249.

of Christology and the doctrine of baptism and the Eucharist. He blamed the Lutherans for paving the way to Nazism by leaving the whole realm of politics, government, and state to the politicians alone, based on the distinction of the two kingdoms. Barth pleaded that the inherited differences between the Lutherans and the Reformed no longer be divisive. He called for a step forward to a new, actual confessing in his day. Thereby he prompted the classical Reformed understanding of confession as always timely, contemporary, addressing the given situation and existing challenges. He spoke of Lutheranism as nothing more than a “theological school of thought,” a stream inside a broad and changing tradition of theology no longer demanding its own distinctive church. Mainstream Protestantism in Germany was eager to agree with Barth. Perhaps no one else in postwar Germany was as successful as Karl Barth in pushing Luther and Lutheranism into the background. According to public opinion, Lutheranism had gone out of fashion.

Karl Barth and all who followed him claimed to have resisted the Nazi regime consistently on the basis of a non-Lutheran theology. Indeed they have great and unquestionable merits in this respect. Yet there was also much misinterpretation and misreading of Luther and Lutheranism, deliberately propagated and transformed into action.

In 1947 the EKD was founded as a federation of autonomous territorial churches, each having its own confessional basis and profile. Today it is entirely different. Lutherans, concerned to keep up their respective territorial churches, organized their own association at about the same time, the VELKD (United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany), but nowadays its headquarters are under the same roof as the EKD and there are recommendations to disband the VELKD completely. After all, the member churches of VELKD, all of the Lutheran tradition, have declared intercommunion or “eucharistic hospitality” not only with the Reformed and United churches, but even with the Methodists and Mennonites. Luther would not and could not agree. But who cares for Luther? A different, modern attitude has largely replaced him and his doctrine.

#### WHAT CHARACTERIZES THE SITUATION TODAY?

Hermann Sasse (1895–1976), the great Lutheran theologian previously mentioned (who resigned from his position as a professor at Erlangen University after the EKD was founded and went to Australia to teach there), expressed deep skepticism and resignation concerning the future of the Lutheran Church in Germany already in 1934. In his booklet *Was heißt lutherisch?* he wrote: “From a human point of view and humanly spoken, today in Germany the Lutheran Church is a dying church.”<sup>7</sup> Sasse’s statement, in hindsight, appears genuinely prophetic. However, there is a saying: *Totgesagte leben länger* (“those who are said to be dead live even longer”).

Sasse spoke of the Lutheran Church. He knew (and we should know as well) that no Luther, no Lutheranism can exist and survive without a Lutheran Church unless you are satisfied with a Luther erected as a monument for admiration without obligation. Numerous examples support this statement. For instance, those in the Union churches who had hoped that some Lutheran doctrine, tradition, and confession would survive inside their new Union church bodies failed totally; hardly anything is left. And what about those churches that were “Lutheran” according to their constitution? In Germany (and probably elsewhere) they are in danger of losing their confessional profile. They face a crisis as Luther and Lutheranism are in danger of being forgotten and discarded. It remains an open question: “Does Luther have a future in Germany?”

---

*Perhaps God is using the Muslims to bang our Christian heads together.*

---

The crisis under discussion threatens not only Lutheran churches. It is the crisis of Christianity in the Western world regardless of confession. We are confronted with dangers, with thoughts and activities trying to destroy the Christian faith from outside the church as well as from inside.

There is the general secularization of our days, due to more than the periods of Nazism and Communism in Germany, which erased Christian faith from the hearts of so many people by actively fighting it. It is due also to modern materialism and self-centeredness. This leaves scarcely any space for church, church life, and the Christian confession in the contemporary *Spaßgesellschaft*, the “party-and-pleasure mode of life.” Many ask: What is the church—any church—good for? Is it not time to do away with faith and with the church altogether? The church seems to be useless and outdated, on the verge of disappearing. If anything is expected from the church, it is perhaps certain values and moral standards for which the church stands and which we might be afraid to lose. This identification of Christianity and church with ethics and some kind of moral system is not totally new.

The German Lutheran theologian Werner Elert (1885–1954) already in 1933 deplored what he called the *Ethicisierung des Kirchengedankens*, “ethicizing the concept of the church,” that is, thinking of the church exclusively in the realm of ethics. This trend has increased dramatically ever since. It accompanies an increase of individualism, which deprives many of the ability to make any firm and permanent commitment. This phenomenon is widespread all over Europe. Political parties, labor unions, societies, and associations of all kinds (the Red Cross, to name one example)—all such organizations suffer from the loss of members to the same extent as the churches. The high percent-

7. Sasse, *W7. Was heißt lutherisch?*, 6: “Die lutherische Kirche ist heute in Deutschland, menschlich gesehen und menschlich geredet, eine sterbende Kirche.” The English translation is from *Here We Stand*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1938).

age of divorce in our country indicates the same problem. Our society is falling apart, and widespread individualism prevails. Besides this, many people today are simply without orientation in relation to values, truth, and ethical standards. They are floating around, and this clearly reveals that churches in Germany today have lost much of their former influence. They have been marginalized and no longer stabilize society to their former extent. In this context the growing number of Muslims in our country determined to spread Islam are increasingly influential. Perhaps they will eventually cause the Christians in our country to remember what their heritage is all about, or, as an American author recently said: “Perhaps God is using the Muslims to bang our Christian heads together.”<sup>8</sup> Churches seem uncertain about how to respond to this challenge. Watering down their confessional profile to unlimited tolerance cannot be the answer.

---

### *A faith once shaped by this confession is no longer practiced.*

---

Dangers coming from inside Christianity and threatening Lutheranism are closely linked with the overall condition in society. Traditions are crumbling away, indifference replaces conviction, and accommodation supersedes confessional profile. Authority is questioned or even denied. This includes the authority of the Scriptures, once the foundation of Lutheran doctrine. The situation is characterized by a striking example in the bookstores. The present pope published a book on “Jesus of Nazareth” (which immediately became a bestseller by an incredible margin), teaching us the authority of Scriptures and presenting an appropriate exegesis, which Lutherans can only applaud. At the same time, bookstores carry a new translation of the Bible called *Die Bibel in gerechter Sprache*, “The Bible in fair language,” prepared by Protestant authors and supported by high-ranking church leaders of the EKD both financially and by written consent. The translation clearly denies what is written in the text in the interest of “doing justice” to women who have been discriminated against. The retired bishop Ulrich Wilkens, himself a New Testament scholar and translator, called this bungling work a scandal, and was immediately slandered for being a “fundamentalist” (about the worst name to be called in this context). To quote Hermann Sasse, already in 1934 writing a prophetic word:

The moment will come in which more respect for the authority of the Bible is found within the Roman Catholic

Church than in the church which calls herself evangelical out of old custom or in memory of what existed once four hundred years ago.<sup>9</sup>

It is, by the way, the present pope who constantly deplors relativism as an infecting sickness of our time, relativism that attempts to escape the truth binding our conscience—and I think he is right (not because he is the pope, but because his analysis is correct). No longer does any truth exist that can be formulated and articulated; all is regarded to be in a process of constant change. So formulations of old, doctrine and confessions of the past, are regarded as possibly good for former generations and the time in which they were produced, but no longer good for us today. This corresponds to the idea that we need new confessions in our day to address the challenges before us. This idea has created more new doctrinal documents, statements, confessions, and creeds than ever before.

There is another danger confronting the church in Germany: we have lost the knowledge of sin; we are no longer conscious of the last judgment and no longer seem to have any need for forgiveness. We are unable to realize how vitally necessary it still is. In Germany being a Christian does not necessarily mean being concerned about one’s eternal salvation, but being much more concerned about social issues and problems. That is Christian faith at a flat rate.

#### **DOES LUTHER HAVE A FUTURE IN GERMANY?**

We have reduced our Lutheran Confessions to the level of old documents, stemming from a historic period that has passed away, a stage we have overcome. (The previously mentioned Leuenberg Concord does this.) If our Confessions are a statement that may once have been relatively true but no longer conforms to our present perception, we have lost much more than a book that established a great tradition. It is far more than that. A faith once shaped by this confession is no longer practiced. This is noticeable by the fact that confession of sin and Holy Absolution have become almost obsolete and have largely fallen out of use (and, by the way, not only in the Lutheran Church). Consequently the understanding of sin has grown flat. The celebration of the Lord’s Supper has degenerated in some places into a celebration of mutual love for one another, replacing the theological emphasis with an anthropological one. Reducing the pastoral office to the job of a functionary or theological expert and advisor resulted in democratic structures of leadership in the church and made it hard to identify the bearer of authority given by Christ who can speak and act on behalf of his Lord. The fading of the concept of the church as the body of Christ gave room for a concept of a human organization, an assembly of like-minded fellow believers, concentrated on

---

8. Philip Jenkins, *God’s Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe’s Religious Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 259; see also 9.

---

9. “. . . wird der Zeitpunkt kommen, an dem in der römisch-katholischen Kirche mehr Achtung vor der Autorität der Bibel zu finden ist als in der Kirche, die sich aus alter Gewohnheit oder in Erinnerung an das, was vor 400 Jahren einmal war, evangelische Kirche nennt” (sasse, *Was heißt lutherisch?*, 57).

the needs and problems among themselves and in this world. Giving up the inherited order of worship and “old” hymns and replacing them with “contemporary” forms, songs, and music proved to be more destructive than helpful. There are a growing number of churchgoers who find themselves strangers to what they experience on Sunday morning. Their response is to stop attending.

There is a widespread feeling of helplessness, reflected in the statement called *Kirche der Freiheit*, an “impulse paper” of the EKD outlining perspectives for the Evangelical Church in the twenty-first century, edited in 2006 by the EKD headquarters. Found in this one-hundred-ten-page document is a rather realistic description of the present situation and what to expect if the present trend continues. In this case the EKD membership will drop from its current twenty-six million to seventeen million by 2030 (a drop of one-third!). Church taxes (the foremost financial basis of EKD member churches) will drop from four billion Euro per year to two billion. The number of clergy will fall from twenty thousand four hundred to thirteen thousand—a reduction by one third. This may result in a large number of churches closing, or at least making pastors serve more than one congregation. By and large it is a rather depressing picture, revealing a deep crisis and a gloomy perspective, calling for repentance and a turnaround.

I am not going to comment in detail on all the suggestions and recommendations made in this article. There is a lively debate at the moment and there is no consensus in sight. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the committee of experts who wrote the document call for “venturing and forming more freedom,”<sup>10</sup> and for a “church of freedom, open and inviting, responsible for matters of this world and culture-orientated.”<sup>11</sup> They praise “inward plurality” as “temptation and blessing of Protestantism at the same time,”<sup>12</sup> based on the pretension “to keep together Enlightenment and piety, reason and faith, knowledge and cultivation of the heart.”<sup>13</sup> They want to form a “church of freedom and individuality,” but one wonders if it is still the church of the apostles, the martyrs, and great teachers of the past, the church Luther wanted to cleanse, the church Löhe and Walther had in mind. In this 2006 document you will not find as much as you might expect about the church’s main task, namely, to proclaim Christ and his gospel, to bring salvation and to lead to eternal life.

I frankly confess that after studying this document I have lost confidence in the future of an Evangelical Church in Ger-

many, not to speak of a Lutheran one. If you no longer need the Scriptures and the Confessions to determine the church’s identity, you have indeed lost your confessional profile and surrendered to modern pluralism.

We may have to accept that churches in general and a Lutheran Church in particular will gradually disappear from the public scene in Germany. There seems to be no need for the church. Christians in general and Lutherans in particular find themselves increasingly marginalized. A few years ago Johannes Gross, a well-known, brilliant German journalist and editor and an accurate observer of public life, made a remarkable point. By the end of the twenty-first century, he said, the Protestant and the Lutheran churches will not have survived. Only the Roman Catholic Church will be left. Perhaps he was too negative or altogether wrong with his prognosis. I guess that some small groups, some small churches will last. This includes Lutherans, but they will be marginalized.

---

### *Lutherans in particular find themselves increasingly marginalized.*

---

We have asked whether Luther has a future in Germany. And I observed that I am not a prophet who can give a reliable answer to this question. That being said, I am quite skeptical. We must realize that there is no copyright for the name of Luther and Lutheranism. Anybody in Germany and elsewhere may and can make use of it. We have numerous institutions, organizations, and even churches in Germany that still call themselves Lutheran and claim to be Lutheran in all honesty. However, sometimes they simply embellish themselves with the name of the great Reformer and teacher of the church. What is sold by the name “Lutheran” is not always truly Lutheran.

Does Luther have a future? It depends on what Luther we think of. He will certainly be left on monuments; they do not harm anyone. He will remain an object of research and scholarly work. He will be remembered as a great man in history. His grave will be visited by multitudes of tourists and they will all sing “A Mighty Fortress” in Wittenberg’s Castle Church (which, by the way, has not been a Lutheran church for almost two hundred years). But the Luther who once brought the gospel to flash up again, who confessed the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the blessed sacrament, who kneeled before the Scriptures as the living word of God and ultimate authority, who made the pope tremble and taught a whole nation to put our confidence in Christ alone: does he have a future in Germany? I do not know. And, in all sincerity, I am not really concerned about him or even for Lutheranism and a church body named Lutheran. I am not concerned about Luther. Why not? Because I know what Luther himself once expressed by these words:

10. “mehr Freiheit wagen und gestalten” (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland Rat, *Kirche der Freiheit: Perspektiven für die Evangelische Kirche im 21. Jahrhundert: Ein Impulspapier des Rates der EKD* [Hannover: Kirchenamt der EKD, 2006], 34).

11. “Kirche der Freiheit . . . die offen und einladend, weltverantwortlich und kulturorientiert ist” (*Kirche der Freiheit*, 44).

12. “Die innere Pluralität. . . ist zugleich Versuchung und Segen des Protestantismus” (*Kirche der Freiheit*, 50).

13. “Aufklärung und Frömmigkeit, Vernunft und Glaube, Wissenschaft und Herzensbildung zusammen zu halten” (*Kirche der Freiheit*, 72).

He cannot lie who says: "I am with you to the end of the world" and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." All the same, we are ordered to watch out and keep the light as well as we can. . . . May God help us, as he has helped our ancestors and will also help our descendants. . . . For it is not we who could preserve the church; our ancestors could not do so, nor will it be our descendants. Instead, it was and still is and will be he who says: "I am with you always, even to the end of the world," as is written in Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ heri et hodie et in saecula" [yesterday and today and forever], and Revelation 1:4: "Who was, and who is, and who is to come." Yes, the man is so named, and no one else bears this name; nor should any other be so named.<sup>14</sup>

If God wills, Luther will have a future—even in Germany.

LOGIA

14. "Er kann nicht lügen, da er sagt: 'Ich bin bei euch bis zu Ende der Welt' 'und der Höllen Pforten sollen die Kirche nicht überwältigen,' ohn daß uns gleichwohl auch befohlen ist zu wachen, und das Licht, so viel an uns ist, zu verwahren. . . . Gott helfe uns, wie er unsern Vorfahren geholfen, und unsern Nachkommen auch helfen wird. . . . Denn wir sind es doch nicht, die da könnten die Kirche erhalten; unsere Vorfahren sind es auch nicht gewesen; unsere Nachkommen werden's auch nicht sein; sondern der ist's gewest, ist's noch, wird's sein, der da spricht: 'Ich bin bei euch bis zur Welt Ende', wie Hebr. 13, 8 steht: 'Jesus Christus heri et hodie et in saecula', und Offenb. 1, 4: 'Der es war, der es ist, der es sein wird.' Ja, so heißt der Mann, und so heißt kein anderer Mann und soll auch keiner so heißen" (Martin Luther, *Wider die Antinomer*, 1539 [WA 50: 476; St. L. 20: 1621]).

## LOGIA BOOKS

**Communion Fellowship: A Resource for Understanding, Implementing, and Retaining the Practice of Closed Communion in the Lutheran Parish**  
By Paul T. McCain (33 pages) • \$6.00

**The Christological Character of the Office of the Ministry & Royal Priesthood**  
By Jobst Schöne (24 pages) • \$3.50

**Dying to Live: A Study Guide**  
By John T. Pless (28 pages) • \$3.00  
(*Dying to Live* by H. Senkbeil may be ordered from CPH)

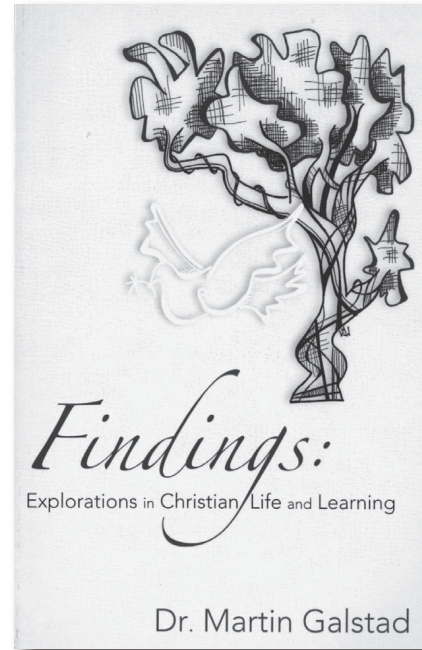
### TO ORDER

- ▶ Outside the U.S. add \$5 per book for shipping & handling
- ▶ See page 1 for more ordering information

(605) 887-3145  
WWW.LOGIA.ORG

## **Findings: Explorations in Christian Life and Learning** (second edition)

By Dr. Martin Galstad



An outstanding book and a model of Christian scholarship.

**262 pages - \$16.00**

*If hard truth must be spoken, here's hoping we can learn anew from Martin Galstad's words: "It is not the tornado or lightning that breaks rocks into sand and soil; it is more often the quiet expansion of the frost and ice that are not even heard on a cold winter night." ...or the still, small voice of the Gospel. —Mark Braun*

Available from

**WISCONSIN LUTHERAN COLLEGE**

8800 W. Bluemound Rd.  
Milwaukee, WI 53226

**To order online:**

**<http://www.wlc.edu/galstad/>**

For further information email [books@wlc.edu](mailto:books@wlc.edu)

# The Leuenberg “Concord”

JOBST SCHÖNE



## THE LEUENBERG CONCORD What It Is All About

**A**FTER LENGTHY DOCTRINAL DISCUSSIONS between theologians and church leaders representing various churches in Europe, of Lutheran as well as Reformed and United background, a document of agreement was finally signed in 1973 called the Leuenberg Concord (abbreviated hereafter “LC”; numbers in parentheses refer to the official numbering of the respective paragraphs).<sup>\*</sup> The idea behind this endeavor was to “affirm together the common understanding of the Gospel,” which should enable these “Reformation Churches” “to declare and to realize church fellowship” (LC 1) and to overcome “the differences which from the time of the Reformation onwards have made church fellowship between the Lutheran and Reformed churches impossible” (LC 17).

The document with which we are dealing has its name from a convention center in the suburbs of the city of Basel, Switzerland, hardly known to anyone, except because of this agreement signed thirty-six years ago. Leuenberg is located in what can be called “canonical territory” of Zwinglianism and Calvinism. I do not know why this place had been chosen for conferences and meetings over the years that finally led to the Leuenberg Concord, but in the end “Leuenberg” became the code word for a document of deep and far-reaching influence on considerable parts of Christianity today, mainly but not only in Europe. In the meantime one hundred and five different churches and denominations in Europe and elsewhere in the world, including South America, have subscribed to the Leuenberg Concord. It has made its way into the appendix of hymn books, is listed among confessional writings, and has paved the way for the merger of churches formerly having a different confessional profile.

The major Protestant churches in Europe adopting the Leuenberg Concord in 1973 declared agreement on many important doctrines, including Christology, the Eucharist, predestination, and justification. The churches that originally were involved formed the “Leuenberg Church Fellowship,” renamed in 2003 the “Community of Protestant Churches in Europe.”

---

JOBST SCHÖNE is Bishop Emeritus of the Selbständige Evangelische Lutherische Kirche (SELK) in Germany. The following article was originally an essay presented to the International Lutheran Conference on “Lutheran Unity: I Believe in One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church” held at Klaipeda, Lithuania, on 16 June 2009, and at the FELS R Retreat, South Africa, on 12 August 2009.

This indicates that the purpose of the Leuenberg Concord is to establish more than some kind of loose fellowship among churches. It is intended to produce “community,” a growing together, and a process of increasing unity.

The overcoming of divisions among the participating churches was made possible either by agreement in doctrine or by the creation of new doctrine. The Leuenberg Concord declares,

In the view of the Reformation, it follows that agreement in the right teaching of the Gospel and in the right administration of the sacraments is the necessary and sufficient prerequisite for the true unity of the Church (LC 2).

The Leuenberg Concord thereby seems to take up what Article VII of the Augsburg Confession declares to be enough (*satis est*) for the true unity of the church. It does this, however, with its own interpretation of what *right teaching* and *right administration* is all about, as we will see later on.

The Leuenberg Concord is divided up into four chapters dealing with the following items:

- I. The Road to Fellowship
- II. The Common Understanding of the Gospel
- III. Accord in Respect of the Doctrinal Condemnations of the Reformation Era
- IV. The Declaration and Realization of Church Fellowship

The “common understanding” of the gospel is grounded in the second chapter on “The Message of Justification as the Message of the Free Grace of God” (LC 7–12) and unfolded with respect to “Preaching, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper” (LC 13–16). In the third chapter, former “mutual condemnations related to the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, Christology, and the doctrine of predestination” are declared to be applicable no longer “to the contemporary doctrinal position of the assenting churches” and “impossible” to be reaffirmed today (LC 17–28). The fourth

---

\* Quotations from the Leuenberg Concord are taken from the official English translation, “Agreement between Reformation Churches in Europe (The Leuenberg Agreement) 16 March 1973,” copyrighted by The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom. Available at <http://www.leuenberg.net/daten/Image/Konkordie-en.pdf>. Quotations from the Augsburg Confession are taken from Kolb-Wengert.

chapter contains the essential point of the Leuenberg Concord: “Declaration and Realization of Church Fellowship.” This means that “on the basis of the consensus they have reached in their understanding of the Gospel, churches with different confessional positions accord each other fellowship in word and sacrament and strive for the fullest possible cooperation in witness and service to the world” (LC 29). This fellowship is realized by according “each other table and pulpit fellowship; this includes mutual recognition of ordination and the freedom to provide for inter-celebration” (LC 33).

---

*The church was now seen as a man-made society—not of divine origin or divinely instituted.*

---

In order to understand this agreement and to estimate its importance, we have to go back into history. It did not happen all of a sudden, nor from mere zealotry, that such an “agreement” could be reached and such steps could be taken. Instead, it originated from a development that has its roots far back in the Reformation century.

**THE LEUENBERG CONCORD**  
**Background and History**

It has always been the conviction of the Zwinglians and Calvinists that the Lutheran Reformation had somehow stopped halfway in remodeling the church in the Occident. They were sure that only Calvinism had fully done the job, leaving behind all the errors and mistakes and defects of the Middle Ages. Lutherans saw themselves constantly accused of being intolerant when they refused to go along with the Calvinists, while the Calvinists—for good reasons, namely to be fully recognized and legalized—constantly pushed for “unity of Protestantism” and for fellowship in terms of organic union.

Lutherans therefore found themselves placed between two front lines, being urged either to set their face against the communion and unity we have with generations of fellow Christians in the past (that is, with the holy, orthodox, apostolic church that came before us), or against communion, fellowship, and even union with those parts of Christianity today that are so “open-minded.” It comes to this: Either break with the fathers in faith and their confession, or break with the contemporary Christians who are seeking unity with us. This is indeed a dilemma! I will try to show that we also have to make a decision which way to go.

Leaving the sixteenth century aside, let us take a look at the first half of the seventeenth century. Central Europe went through a terrible and great war, lasting over thirty years. It was not only a great clash of hostile political powers seeking pre-

dominance over each other, but a conflict of different doctrinal and theological positions as well, the papal one and the Lutheran. Both parties, Lutheran and Roman, claimed to be in and to represent the one and the same church that they confessed in the creed. They looked on their differences as different, contradictory positions held within the one and the same church, still believing that there existed only one church!

But by 1648, the end of that terrible war, it became quite clear that the parties had developed into two separated confessions and separated church bodies. And a third one had entered the stage, namely Calvinism, which now got official, legal recognition for the first time and the status of a confession of its own. The “Reformed Church” was established thereafter also in those parts of Central Europe where it had not been legalized so far.

From that point forward there was this problem of at least two churches, two confessions side by side, each one claiming to be the genuine representative of the Reformation: Lutherans and Calvinists (or “the Reformed”), leaving aside all the other denominations originating from Zwinglianism and Calvinism, for example, the Anabaptists and their kin. After all, Calvinism gave birth to almost all the sects and groups that separated from the church.

Half a century later, the movements of Pietism and Rationalism in the eighteenth century began to water down the differences between Lutherans and Reformed, putting a new accent on private piety and morals, promoting Christian individualism, not caring so much for the church, office of the ministry, sacraments, and liturgy.

The change of emphasis led to a change of mind. The church was declared to be a human-made assembly of pious individuals coming together for the joint exercise of religious practice on the basis of personal piety and feelings. The church was now seen as a man-made society, not of divine origin or divinely instituted. The famous German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher was responsible for propagating these ideas in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Then the question came up: Why not merge? Why not unite these separated “Protestant” churches, as their inherited doctrinal differences had obviously become totally obsolete and outdated?

This was the date of the birth of Union churches in Germany in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Creating such Union churches by an amalgamation (that is, a merger of different confessions apart from doctrinal agreement) destroyed the Lutheran Church in many states where the Lutheran Reformation had its beginning. Foremost among these was Prussia, Germany’s largest state of that time. The Prussian king, himself a Calvinist and deeply influenced by Pietism, claimed authority over the Lutheran Church in his state as “supreme bishop” by virtue of his position as head of state.

The Prussian king was of a somewhat strange character. He not only found pleasure in designing himself a new black gown for the clergy and Jewish rabbis, he also restructured the church’s administration. Finally, he himself drafted a new liturgy for his Union church, which avoided a clear confessional position. He hoped for an entirely new confessional basis, doing away with the inherited symbolical writings on both sides.



He intended to form a new church “in the spirit of moderation and mildness,” as he explained in a royal edict published in 1834. “A spirit,” he continued, “of not letting the differences in some doctrinal articles be the reason to refuse external church fellowship any longer.” This meant open communion at the same altar.

---

*The “United” churches of today are characterized by an immense variety of opinions, positions, and convictions.*

---

Some years before, in 1817, this king had already declared that the Lutheran and the Reformed churches should make up a united church because they were already “one in the main,” that is, in the essentials. He said,

Neither should the Reformed church pass over into the Lutheran nor that one into the other, but both should become a newly enlivened evangelical-Christian church in the spirit of its holy founder.

The confessions that each church had accepted so far should not become ineffective right away, but — since the king believed that unity in the essentials did exist already — should become obsolete and ineffective in the long run. Local congregations were allowed to keep their confessions as a tradition, a historic heritage, not binding the entire church any longer.

What did this union of long separated churches achieve? In the end it created another confession next to the Lutheran and the Reformed, based not on clear doctrinal positions, but largely on feelings, allowing congregations and pastors to make up their own mind in theology and church life. The “United” churches of today are characterized by an immense variety of opinions, positions, and convictions, often contradicting each other, and often home for very weak, liberal theology.

This development, which I have tried to outline briefly, is behind the Leuenberg Concord. You have to see the Leuenberg Concord in line with the Unionism of the 1810s and the following decades. In 1981 the Finnish theologian Tuomo Mannermaa presented a profound analysis of the Leuenberg Concord under the title *Von Preußen nach Leuenberg* (“From Prussia to Leuenberg”), in which he pointed out how this twentieth-century agreement called Leuenberg can be — even has to be — traced back to the process that took place in the beginning of the nineteenth century. He showed how the Leuenberg Concord followed precisely the same pattern as the Prussian Union, creating the same results.

However, in this long period of more than one-and-a-half centuries, from establishing Union churches to finally proclaiming the Leuenberg Concord, all churches involved underwent considerable changes in theology as well as church life. The Ecumenical Movement, starting out with the formation of global confessional alliances and federations, created and strengthened a new and strong desire for unity among Christians and among churches. Differences and divisions were no longer accepted as simply indispensable and irrevocable. The scandal of a divided Christianity, not able to give witness to the world with one voice, has become all too obvious. We now face a growing indifference and unconcern about the church and Christian belief in the Western and Eastern societies. This situation calls for united activity.

Liberal theology has been questioning more and more the authority of the Scriptures, as well as of the Confessions. Christians find themselves, at the same time, under pressure from latent or openly aggressive atheism and have to think it over: Do their differences still have a legitimate basis and do they have to be maintained? As they are moving more and more into a minority position in contemporary society — even in those parts of the world that have been Christianized for centuries and where they formerly had represented the majority of the population — Christians are getting anxious to stabilize their seemingly weak position. No wonder that new concepts for unity among churches are arising!

This strongly desired unity can manifest itself in different ways, for instance,

- either as a federation, alliance, or network of different churches for the purpose of practical cooperation; this was the idea of the “Life and Work” branch of the Ecumenical Movement under the slogan “doctrine divides, service unites”;
- or as eucharistic fellowship and intercommunion, assuming full or partial mutual recognition of formerly separated churches and their doctrine;
- or as organic union, bringing all churches in a given region or territory into a corporate union in which they all give up their former confessional identity.

These are different concepts, but all of them are characterized by the unresolved tension between unity and diversity, unanimity and pluralism: How far can plurality or pluralism and diversity go without destroying unity? Is a minimum of common expression of the faith enough, and where is the borderline between necessary unity and unnecessary uniformity?

The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, set forth its concept of unity quite clearly in the Second Vatican Council in 1964. In that council’s declarations, Christians of other denominations — Orthodox as “sister churches” and others as “ecclesiastical communities” — are respected as brothers in the Lord, sharing a number of elements and properties in the faith with the Roman Church (though of course in variable degree), but lacking the fullness of all the gifts Christ has entrusted to his church. From this point of view — reaffirmed not too long ago

by Pope Benedict XVI—unity in the end can only be achieved by entering into full communion with the pope and accepting all the teachings of the Roman Church.

---

***Lutherans felt they could lose their political influence if they would not go shoulder to shoulder with the United and Reformed.***

---

In contrast to this concept, another has developed among the non-Roman churches organized in the World Council of Churches (WCC), called “conciliar fellowship.” It has its roots in the idea of organic union on a multilateral basis, at first among local churches, expanding in the course of time over a region, an area, and a country. That implies a process of growing conformity and accord, finally ending up in complete “unity.” This concept was adopted by the WCC General Assembly in 1975.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)—and likewise the World Alliance of Reformed Churches—favored a somewhat different concept called “reconciled diversity.” It too is a concept of a gradual approach of churches involved with each other. The LWF General Assembly in 1977 at Dar es Salaam, Africa, formally approved of this concept. From that time on it has received far-reaching support in many parts of the world. The Leuenberg Concord is perhaps the most important example, giving expression to this concept of “reconciled diversity” in detail. In fact, the idea behind it leaves room for a multiplicity of expressions of faith and doctrine. It allows for plurality—that is not to say pluralism—but it denies the separating character of existing differences, which already are or have to be “reconciled.”

We have to see the Leuenberg Concord in this historical and contemporary context. Doctrinal discussions leading to the Leuenberg agreement started already in the 1950s. German theologians for the most part took the lead in this. They came from different camps, representing Lutheran churches on the one hand, United and Reformed churches on the other. Since the end of World War II these different “state” churches existing in Germany—Lutheran, Reformed and United—had come together under one and the same roof, called the “Evangelical Church in Germany” (EKD).

By the 1950s EKD was regarded by the Lutherans as a mere federation of distinct churches, while the others took it as a church in the full theological sense and meaning of the word. Some spoke of a “federation of churches,” others of a “federal church,” which had to be developed into full organic union—probably with different local traditions, customs, theological schools, and the like—but inside a united church with no essential differences.

The representatives of these United and Reformed churches were the ones who pushed for complete fellowship, while the Lutherans—or at least some of them—were somewhat hesitant, though to a large part also were convinced that close cooperation was at least needed. After all, in the western part of Germany, forming the Federal Republic, the Roman Catholic Church had the majority of the population and was therefore predominant in politics and society. Lutherans felt they could lose their political influence if they would not go shoulder to shoulder with the United and Reformed.

In the end, this turned out to be a tragic error. The Lutherans lost completely, because they lost their profile and became interchangeable with the Reformed and United churches. A bishop of the United Church in Berlin, Otto Dibelius, had already in the 1930s spoken of the “German Evangelical Church”—the forerunner of the EKD after World War II—as “the railway sleeping car by which the Lutherans should be carried into the Union” of all Protestants. This is exactly what happened!

### THE LEUENBERG CONCORD

#### Contents and Significance

If you read the Leuenberg Concord, you will find that the churches assenting declare to have reached “the common understanding of the Gospel,” enabling them “to declare and realize church fellowship” (LC 1). They refer to “common aspects at the outset of the Reformation,” namely, that the reformers, Lutherans as well as Calvinists, had in common “a new experience of the power of the Gospel to liberate and assure” (LC 4). Liberate from what? Assure of what? That is left open.

All the Reformers are said to have “found themselves drawn together in opposition to the church traditions of that time” “bearing witness to God’s free and unconditional grace . . . in Jesus Christ for all who believe this promise” (LC 4). Or to say it with one word: justification! All the reformers are said to have had in common the doctrine of justification, regardless of their different interpretations of that doctrine. This raises questions: Is it truly the same understanding of justification? The Lutherans have always understood justification as connected with the *means of grace*—word and sacrament—and strictly distinct from sanctification, while the Reformed always mixed the two together.

At this point the Leuenberg Concord goes beyond this common basis for fellowship, perhaps urged by the feeling that this was not a ground as firm and solid as some people believed. The Leuenberg Concord therefore sets forth a second foothold, called “changed elements in the contemporary situation.” The churches, so says the Leuenberg Concord, “have been led to new and similar ways of thinking and living” in “the course of four hundred years of history.” “Questions of modern times,” “advances in biblical research,” “the revival movements,” “rediscovery of the ecumenical horizon,” and other developments have shaped the churches. They learned “to achieve a contemporary expression both of the biblical witness and of the Reformation confessions” and “to distinguish between the fundamental witness of the Reformation confessions of faith and their historically conditioned thought forms” (LC 5).

These are important and decisive statements. They may sound rather obvious, perhaps even pious and unsuspecting, but there is a lot more behind them than what one sees at first sight. “Questions of modern times” have indeed “led to new ways of thinking” among Christians. “Advances in biblical research” have culminated in the so-called historical-critical method of Bible interpretation, often reducing the Scriptures to literature of mere human origin, denying their character as the word of God.

The Leuenberg Concord deliberately never speaks of the Scriptures as the “word of God,” but as of “the biblical witness.” It hereby follows Karl Barth’s concept, according to which the Scriptures are not the word of God, but only *contain* it. They may however *become* God’s word in a given situation when the Spirit, who is acting and coming independently from the means of grace, will make it for me and others into the word of God, from time to time, as it pleases him.

The distinction between the so-called fundamental witness of the Reformation confessions and “their historically-conditioned thought forms” opens the door not only to dissociate oneself from their condemnations of false doctrine, but to eliminate their normative character in general, to reduce their validity and binding character as to what seems to be acceptable today. Confessions, so we are told, “bear witness to the Gospel as the living Word of God in Jesus Christ” (LC 5), which again sounds quite correct. However, this gospel is described only as “a message of justification,” not as God’s act of justification, (which makes a great difference!) and this phrase is open to all sorts of secular misinterpretation.

If the deed, the act, of justification is thus reduced to a mere *message* of justification, we come close to what in American terminology was called “gospel reductionism,” focusing on what happens in man. In fact, the gospel is understood as a message of “acceptance.” Man should know of, and feel as, being accepted by God, and I am justified when I accept this message. It is *me* on whom justification depends. This concept focuses on man rather than on God’s activity. It focuses on human experience, faith, and feelings far more than on what has been entrusted to us through the word of God.

While the Lutheran concept starts out with the distinction between law and gospel, and takes this distinction as crucial and decisive for all interpretation of Scripture, this issue is left unresolved in the Leuenberg Concord and postponed for later doctrinal discussions. Consequently Leuenberg never speaks about the hiddenness of God, is altogether silent about God’s wrath, and fails to give clear information about man’s need of redemption, because it does not see him under God’s wrath. Christ is confessed as “the coming One who as Judge and Savior leads the world to its consummation” (LC 9).

But nothing is said about the last judgment, the “either-or” of eternal rejection or redemption. Instead we learn that the message of justification “sets Christians free for responsible service in the world. . . . They stand up for temporal justice and peace. . . . They . . . join with others seeking rational and appropriate criteria and play their part in applying these criteria” (LC 11). In this whole program there is no word about the distinction

between the two kingdoms, the two ways by which God rules and guides his church and the world, which corresponds to the distinction between law and gospel, from which concept flows the distinction between state and church.

Such distinctions in the Lutheran way of theology provide for contemporary political ethics without mixing state and church, that is, without mingling politics and the Christian faith. Mixture of that kind comes from a missing distinction between law and gospel and turns the gospel upside-down into a new law by which the secular world should be governed. The gospel thus appears to be a “Social Gospel.”

---

*In this whole program there is no word about the distinction between the two kingdoms.*

---

The Leuenberg Concord ascribes to the Confessions of the Reformation period that they “bear witness” to this gospel, and “far from barring the way to continued responsible testimony to this Word, they open up this way with a summons to follow it in the freedom of faith” (LC 5). “Bearing witness” is not quite the same as “teaching” by doctrine and proclamation. Instead, it allows for all kinds of new formulation of the gospel message, of new confessions to be produced, outrunning or even replacing the Confessions of old.

At this point we should have in mind the traditional Reformed concept of confessions, namely, that they are declarations made only for a certain time and situation, referring to current events, needing to be updated or even replaced by new confessions from time to time, from situation to situation. The Reformed churches therefore know of many more confessions than the Lutherans. They came into existence in various parts of the world, binding only churches in a certain area or territory, and for a certain time.

According to this principle the Leuenberg Concord accepts the confessional writings of the sixteenth century only as an expression of faith of that time and its given situation; it respects them as such, but not as binding today. So we are encouraged to look for a more suitable, adequate, and proper formulation of faith, giving witness to the gospel in our times. The Leuenberg Concord itself claims to be up-to-date and a fitting formulation of faith, though, however, avoiding any formal rejection of the old confessions except for their condemnations of contradicting doctrines. Such condemnations “no longer apply to the contemporary doctrinal position of the assenting churches” (LC 32), so we are told.

The “common understanding of the Gospel insofar as this is required for establishing church fellowship” is explained in the Leuenberg Concord in some detail with reference to certain issues that have traditionally been in dispute between Lutherans

and Reformed, particularly the doctrines of the Lord's Supper, Christology, and predestination. As soon as it comes to these points, the Leuenberg Concord is rather vague and unclear, if not ambiguous and misleading.

Even when the Leuenberg Concord speaks about Holy Baptism, it avoids a clear statement. We learn that Christ "receives man . . . into his fellowship of salvation . . . [and] calls him into his community and to a new life of faith, to daily repentance and discipleship" (LC 14). That is fine and one can hardly argue against this description. However nothing is said about the necessity of baptism for salvation. To be "received," to be "called" can happen without and besides Holy Baptism. Infant baptism is not mentioned at all.

---

### Is "acceptance" the same as "redemption" based on Christ's death and resurrection?

---

Regarding the Eucharist, the Leuenberg Concord teaches that "the risen Jesus Christ imparts himself in his body and blood, given up for all, through his word of promise with bread and wine; faith receives the Lord's Supper for salvation, unfaith for judgement" (LC 18). This is, in fact, totally ambivalent and can be interpreted in the Reformed understanding as well as in the Lutheran. The doctrine of the Lord's Supper is reduced to a kind of general "word theology" since it fails to recognize the significance of Christ's presence in the elements.

Using the terminology "with bread and wine" can describe a kind of parallel eating and drinking, according to Calvin's concept in which we lift up our mind to heaven to receive the body and blood of Christ absent from earth. The concentration on a mere "with" instead of the Lutheran "in, with, and under the bread and wine" leaves therefore a place for the Reformed doctrine. It also casts doubt on the Lutheran doctrine that unbelievers actually eat and drink the truly present body and blood of Christ, though for their judgment, called *manducatio indignorum*. In the Leuenberg Concord, Christ's presence is one of mere "personal" presence "through the word of promise," not a real presence of his body and blood in the elements by virtue and power of Christ's words of institution.

The Lutheran position is directly questioned, as we read, "To be concerned about the manner of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper in abstraction from this act is to run the risk of obscuring the meaning of the Lord's Supper" (LC 19). It states "of eating and drinking," but what does this mean? Body and blood or merely bread and wine? Why should we not be concerned about the manner of Christ's presence? St. Paul obviously was, Luther was, the Confessions were.

As to Christology, we learn from the Leuenberg Concord that "in the word of the promise and in the sacraments, the

Holy Spirit, and so God himself, makes the crucified and risen Jesus present to us" (LC 21). It is the Spirit, making Jesus present, not precisely his word itself. "Presence in the Spirit": that is the traditional concept of Reformed Christology, in particular with respect to the sacraments. I cannot see how such a position could ever be acceptable for Lutherans, unless they deny their Confessions and separate the Spirit from the word, letting him work apart from it. But what Jesus is this? Still locked in heaven, unable to come down to us in his humanity as well as in his divinity? A Jesus whom we have in our midst only in a spiritualized, symbolical manner?

As to predestination, the Leuenberg Concord excludes implicitly, not directly, the ultra-Calvinistic position of God uttering "an eternal decree for the final condemnation of specific individuals or of a particular people" (LC 25). In this matter the scriptural doctrine has not lost "the mystery of God's dealings with men" (LC 25) and it is respected. This has to be acknowledged. The language, however, still remains somewhat ambivalent. What, for instance, is the meaning of the phrase "Whoever puts his trust in the Gospel can know that he is saved and praise God for his election" (LC 24)? Which gospel is this? In the sentence prior, we find the gospel identified as "the promise of God's unconditional *acceptance* of sinful man" (24). Is "acceptance" the same as "redemption" based on Christ's death and resurrection? This question, and many more, are left unanswered.

In general you will find a new understanding of the gospel, different from what was believed, taught, and confessed in the past. It is a new gospel, limited to what has been elaborated in the Leuenberg Concord as the so-called common understanding of the Gospel. This is said to enable assenting churches "to declare and to realize church fellowship" (LC 1). Such church fellowship does not necessarily need an agreement in all fundamental doctrines, but it is enough to declare former "condemnations pronounced by the Reformation fathers" to be "no longer an obstacle to church fellowship." The "consensus . . . reached in their understanding of the Gospel" allows for fellowship and "for the fullest possible co-operation in witness and service to the world" in spite of still existing "different confessional positions" (LC 29).

The difference between "consensus" nowadays and "consensus" in the past becomes manifest in a new method of theology. It is a new language, using traditional terminology, but presenting an entirely new way of thinking. Two German theologians have paved the way for this new language: Gerhard Ebeling and Wenzel Lohff. Both asked the question, "What is enough for unity in the church?" and consequently for church fellowship. They answer this question by making a sharp distinction between Christ on the one hand, and what we can perceive of him on the other. They make a sharp distinction between Christ and any doctrine about him; between faith that trusts in Christ, called "justifying faith," and the expression of such faith, that is, its formulation in terms of doctrine and dogma.

*Doctrina evangelii*, of which the Augsburg Confession is talking, is understood exclusively as proclamation, as actual preaching that "I am accepted," not as doctrine. Ebeling has admitted that Articles 1–21 of the Augsburg Confession clearly

claim to be and make up the *doctrina evangelii*, that is, the doctrine of the gospel, but he is convinced that such a view cannot be accepted any longer today. He insists that we have nowadays a totally different perception.

Once you think along the line proposed by Ebeling, you will come to the conclusion that any consensus necessary for church fellowship can be limited to what makes the church to be church, namely, the word of the gospel. This word is not identical with the Holy Scriptures, but it is the proclaimed, that is, the preached, word only, the promise of salvation. Gospel, word of God, promise—these words all mean the same thing for Ebeling.

For unity in the church, then, it is enough to have this promise preached, to have the gospel preached in correlation to faith accepting this promise, resulting in justification. “Justifying faith related to the gospel”—that’s it! Nothing more! Any other preconditions for unity in the church demanding more than this kind of gospel promise and, on our side, faith accepting it, are unnecessary and not binding. Any other preconditions for unity are human tradition, historically conditioned, and neither central nor essential. Whatever we may say, formulate, or express about Jesus Christ and the salvation he brought belongs to “historically-conditioned thought forms” (LC 5), which are exposed to constant change and transformation.

Such a distinction between Christ himself and what we confess of him; between the very essence of the gospel, namely, the message that God accepts us, and its historically conditioned formulation; between center and periphery; between the basis of Christian faith and its expression—this distinction is submerged as an undercurrent through all parts of the Leuenberg Concord. It pays tribute to the historical-critical method of interpretation of Scripture. It does this in the way we are urged to find out what the central contents of the Scriptures are and the way we are urged to distinguish it from whatever else goes along with it, that is, its “clothing.” In this way we begin to master the Scriptures instead of being mastered by them.

The same is true for the Confessions of the Reformation period, the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church. What the Leuenberg Concord prescribes for Scripture interpretation, namely, to make the “message of justification” the only guiding principle, is applied in the same way to the Confessions. They have to be taken as a historically conditioned witness of faith, the faith of the Fathers, but not binding the sons any longer. They are considered authoritative only as far as they reflect and express the “message of justification.”

The Leuenberg Concord tries to make use of a distinction we find already in the Augsburg Confession, Article VII, where it says: “It is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere.” This distinction, echoed in the Leuenberg Concord, is however given a totally different meaning: The gospel, interpreted as God’s promise to save mankind, and the sacraments, understood from the specific concept of justification as explained before, are now “enough for the true unity,” while doctrinal statements, as we find them in Articles 1–21 of the Augsburg

Confession, are classified by the Leuenberg Concord as “human traditions . . . instituted by human beings.” Similarity in words simply covers a totally different meaning.

Such a misinterpretation of the Lutheran Confessions—now to speak of the Scriptures—now opens the gates for new concepts of the unity of the church and of church fellowship. In order to be fully aware of what the Leuenberg Concord wants to express, we have to examine carefully its terminology. We need to look at the key words used in this connection, like “Gospel,” the “living Word of God,” “common understanding,” “justification,” “unity,” and “fellowship.” They all accept a somewhat different meaning than what we might assume. “Gospel”—we have seen this already—is understood to be “the living word of God in Jesus Christ.” Here “living” has to be taken as “proclaimed” or “preached.” “Gospel” thus means the “message of justification” only.

---

***Such a misinterpretation of the Lutheran Confessions now opens the gates for new concepts of the unity of the church and of church fellowship.***

---

This message is contained in the Scriptures but they, on the other hand, are not the word of God; instead they give “witness” to it. This witness is a “testimony of the apostles and prophets.” This is a testimony that has to be understood along the line of “advances in biblical research,” that is, understood as “historically-conditioned” terminology and “thought forms.” We find here not only a concentration on the very essence of the gospel, namely justification, but a reduction on what would be meaningful for people of our day. All the rest seems to be irrelevant.

Just as the Scriptures have their center in justification, which is quite correct, so likewise the Confessions of the sixteenth century, insofar as they “bear witness to God’s free and unconditional grace” (LC 4), are a witness in which Lutherans and their opponents on the side of the Reformed are declared to be “at one” (LC 4) “in spite of the differences between them” (LC 4). “With the advantage of historical distance” these churches of different confession now find it “easier . . . to discern the common elements” (LC 4) and move forward to greater unity.

This unity, however, remains somewhat unclear. We learn from the Leuenberg Concord that it is not actually based on consensus, as we would assume, nor on agreement in doctrine, which would be found by searching the Scriptures as the supreme norm and seeing what they reveal to us. Instead, unity is based on the “living Christ,” to be found *in* the gospel message preached and proclaimed, in the promise contained in the gospel, and based on faith in Christ, created by the gospel. It is a faith that believes that I am accepted by God for Christ’s sake.

In this connection, however, we have to keep in mind the following. The Leuenberg Concord makes a distinction between Christ himself, revealed in the word, the message of justification, and all doctrinal statements *about* him. These statements are declared to be of human origin, man-made, subject to change, to alteration, critical inquiry, and they consequently may become insignificant. The Leuenberg Concord gives us a “Christ” shaped according to our needs and understanding. The “unity” among Christians and churches becomes a “reality,” according to the Leuenberg Concord, wherever and whenever such a gospel is preached and believed, due to Christ’s presence in this proclamation. The church is said to confess *him*, not *doctrines* about him.

Unity, then, appears to be a communion originating from the gospel as a promise. God promises to accept me, unconditionally, and I believe it. I do accept that I am accepted. That is justification, according to Leuenberg. And in this view, the gift from God and the contents of my faith become one and the same; the message and what it effects are identical.

The Leuenberg Concord does not deny that such a justifying faith produces expressions of faith in terms of doctrine, doctrinal formulations. That is why we have confessions, creeds, symbols. But since such symbols are considered to be of human origin, of “thought forms” from the past, none of them is a precondition for unity.

Fellowship among churches is, therefore, not based on common convictions expressed in such confessions, but on common activity in preaching Christ and service to the world, and on feelings: “I am accepted!” Fellowship needs agreement simply in some fundamentals, however such an agreement is determined to grow, to expand. In other words, agreement in doctrine is not a necessary prerequisite, but agreement—if it ever can be accomplished—will be the result, the outcome of fellowship, not the starting point.

In view of this concept, we will have to ask: How then can any consensus, any agreement, ever be exposed, secured, or demonstrated if it remains a “silent” feeling, not articulated? Consensus in that way can only be “believed,” but not be proved. Unity thus becomes a “reality” in “faith,” or should we say, in our imagination? It certainly cannot be handed over to other generations. It exists only from time to time, from situation to situation.

The Leuenberg Concord’s concept of unity in the church is therefore somewhat confusing. Unity is said to persist, in spite of differences still existing. These are differences not only in external matters, rites, traditions, canon law, organization, and the like, but differences in doctrine. That is to say: Unity is said to persist in spite of differences in understanding and interpreting the Scriptures. Such differences are declared to be irrelevant and not dividing. Unity becomes a goal, a process in which the churches are engaged, trying to reach greater consensus among themselves. Unity can be achieved by means of fellowship and cooperation, not the other way around.

In Leuenberg, unity is neither based on common structures, organization, offices, cults, rites, and the like, nor on doctrinal agreement. It is not a visible unity, to be solemnized by a union,

that is, a merger of participating churches, but it is expressed by a fellowship of “witness and service.” The Leuenberg Concord does not give any clear answer as to what unity is all about. Did unity always exist or is it now to be achieved? And how? Is “fellowship” the final point of unity, or is more to be done for it? “Fellowship” seems to remain somewhere between division and unity, and unity remains a vague and uncertain matter, believed to exist on the basis of “reconciled diversity.”

The Leuenberg Concord focuses on one single principle, namely justification, which is conceived as a message of grace. This is declared to be the principle of Reformation theology, of Lutheran as well as of Reformed origin. This principle is regarded to be the only one acceptable in our days. Thereby the gospel itself, reduced to a message only, appears to be relevant only in so far as it is meaningful for men, but otherwise not.

It is true that the Lutheran Confessions also focus on justification, conceived as forgiveness of sin, but this cannot be isolated from all the other doctrines explained in the Augsburg Confession, as for instance the doctrines on original sin, on the two natures of Christ, on church and ministry, on repentance, on law and gospel, and on faith and good works.

The doctrine of the gospel, *doctrina evangelii*, is found not only in Article IV on justification, but in all the other articles as well. Only by isolating this article from all other doctrines can the Leuenberg Concord so easily pass over all existing differences and declare them as of minor, if any, importance. Agreement in the fundamental doctrine is declared to be enough and to enable churches to declare fellowship. Clear distinctions are carefully avoided. Consensus, for instance, with respect to the Eucharist, is not reached in doctrine, but the focus is on reception. It only matters if reception of the Eucharist is “according to the gospel” or not, and whether it creates and strengthens faith or not. According to Leuenberg, if we agree that Jesus is the gift and gives himself, it does not matter any longer what we confess or how he gives himself, and whether his true body and blood are present or not.

#### LEUENBERG AND THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

Lutherans should know better what fellowship and unity is all about, what it requires, and how it can be realized. Unity will not be achieved by compromising the truth, not by using unclear terminology, not by reducing the gospel to a single principle, not by passing by the distinction between law and gospel, not by declaring doctrine as irrelevant, and not by leaving aside the Scriptures as the only norm and judge of all doctrine.

Having the Leuenberg Concord before us, we are confronted with a decision to make. *Either* we break with our heritage, with our Confessions, and give up the communion with generations of Christians before us for the sake of greater conformity with other Christians in our times, *or* we stay away from watering down the Scriptures and what they teach us, as it is echoed in the Lutheran Confessions, and therefore refuse to enter into a kind of fellowship that Luther and the Lutheran reformers could not join for serious reasons. We have to decide: Is false doctrine something we might declare irrelevant, or are we urged to stay away from it and keep our doctrine clear and unfalsified?

Article VII of the Augsburg Confession should be taken in its *original* meaning. And if we are not so sure about it, we have the Apology, which explains that meaning so well. In these confessions, we can know about true unity in the church, of fellowship, and what is needed for it. Article VII speaks of the church that we confess in the creeds of the ancient church: the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, which is to be and to remain at all times. For this, and for the unity of that church, it is enough (*satis est*) that “the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word.”

“Pure understanding” and “conformity with the divine Word” are indeed enough, but the word *enough* includes a “necessary” and “indispensable” requirement. What “pure understanding” and “conformity with the divine Word” mean in Augsburg Confession VII is clearly exposed and determined in the Augsburg Confession as a whole. Its articles are not a conglomerate of single, isolated doctrines, of which you may select one or the other to accept or deny.

The Leuenberg Concord intends to step forward to unity in the church universal by “reconciled diversity,” leaving the Scriptures behind, and reducing the gospel to what appears meaningful for men, eliminating the binding character of the Confessions. Yet the stumbling blocks are not only “diversities” of minor importance, but serious differences. We suffer, indeed, from disagreement, divisions, splits, and separation in the church. We should by all means be ready to do our utmost to overcome them. But to compromise doctrine can never be a step forward to true unity. **LOGIA**

[www.logia.org/blog](http://www.logia.org/blog)

**LOGIA**  
A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

Logia Journal Blogia About Us Subscribe Contact Us Store Free Book Login

**Web Forum BLOG-IA** Shorter, thought provoking pieces similar to our LOGIA Forum in print, but on the web.

**Growth in Grace: Where Neuhaus is Right and Where he is Wrong**  
by Mark C. Mattes, Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa

Richard John Neuhaus was one of the most important voices for religion and democracy in America. With his higher education, law, social work, and writing, he inspired Americans. While respecting his evasive decision to leave the faith of his birth, we can learn from his perception of security against intruders.

**Hamann and the Tradition**  
John Pless passed along the following Hamann (1730-1788), the great anti-Enlightenment revival of the 19th century, by Oswald Bayer who will be a major speaker at this conference.

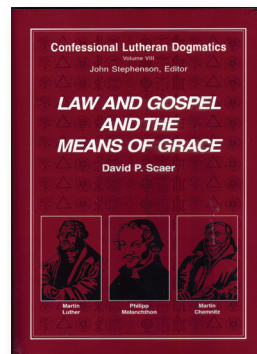
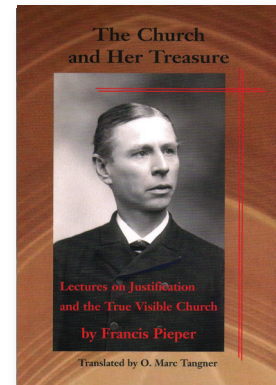
**An opportunity for readers to interact with authors and other readers**

# LUTHER ACADEMY

is pleased to present the following two new publications to the church!

**\$21.95**

*The Church and Her Treasure:  
Lectures on Justification  
and the True Visible Church*  
Francis Pieper  
translated by O. Marc Tangner



**\$23.95\***

Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, vol. VIII  
*Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace*  
David P. Scaer

These books are available for purchase through LOGIA Books:

[www.logia.org](http://www.logia.org)    [logia2@nvc.net](mailto:logia2@nvc.net)    605-887-3145

For membership information: *Luther Academy*  
PO Box 270415  
St. Louis, MO 63127  
[lutheracademy1577@hotmail.com](mailto:lutheracademy1577@hotmail.com)

from **LOGIA Tapes & CDs**

# **Feminism's Influence on the Church**

**Feminism's Influence on the Culture  
That Surrounds the Church, Its Roots,  
Its Impact, Its Future**

Dr. Gene Edward Vieth

**Feminism's Feminization of the Church: Its  
Influence on the Role of Women in the Church**

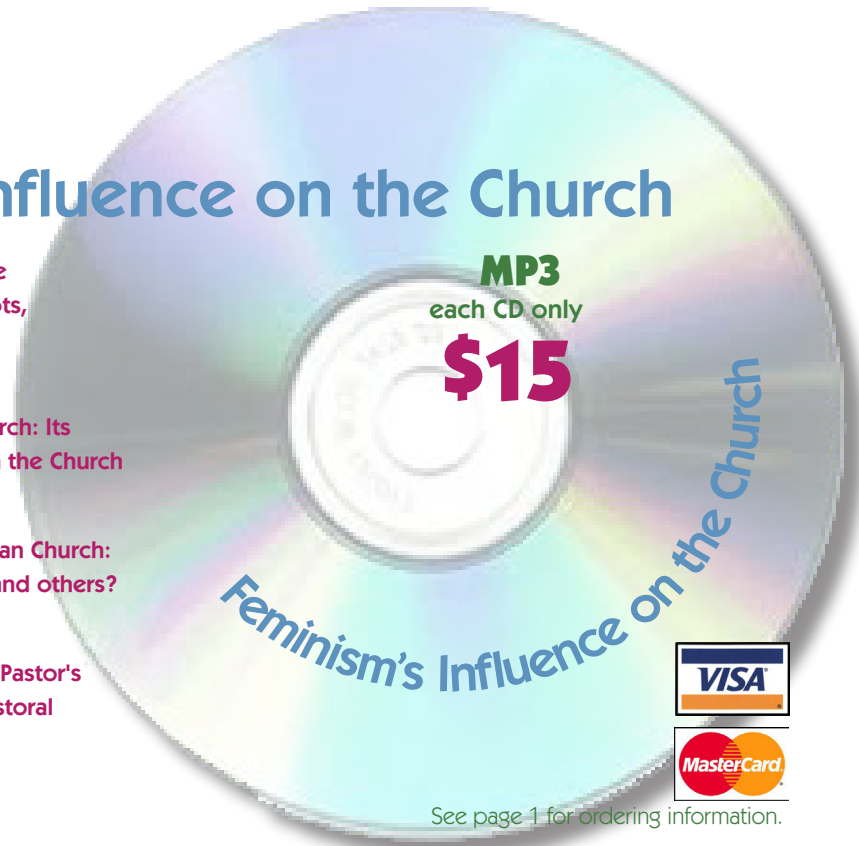
Dr. Erling Teigen

**Feminism's Influence on the Lutheran Church:  
What does this mean for Missouri and others?**

Dr. Detlev Schulz

**Feminism's Influence on the Parish Pastor's  
Ministry: How to be Faithful but Pastoral**

Rev. Nathan R. Pope



**MP3**

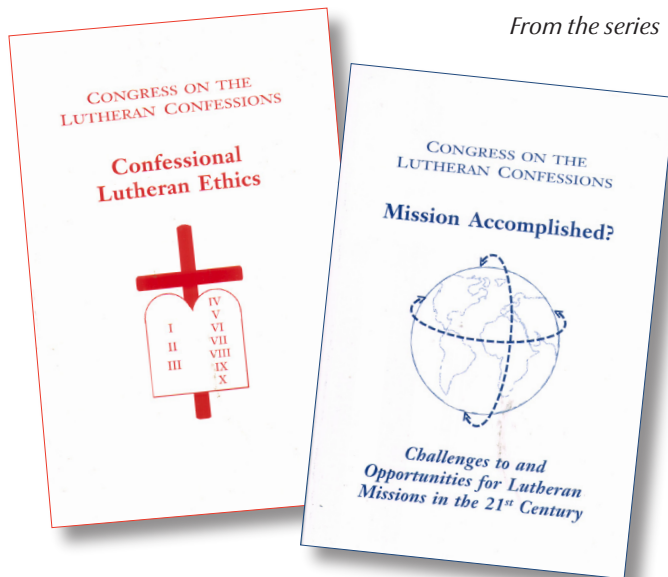
each CD only

**\$15**

**Feminism's Influence on the Church**



See page 1 for ordering information.



From the series

## **CONGRESS ON THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS** (all paperback)

### **Mission Accomplished?**

**Challenges to and Opportunities for Lutheran  
Missions in the Twenty-First Century** (2005) • \$15.95

**Confessional Lutheran Ethics** (1998) • \$15.95

*Also in the series:*

**God and Caesar Revisited** (1994) • \$11.95

**Church Polity and Politics** (1997) • \$15.95

**A Justification Odyssey** (2001) • \$15.95

**Feminism and the Church** (2002) • \$15.95

**Contemporary Issues in Fellowship:  
Confessional Principles and Applications**  
(2003) • \$15.95

**Divine Multi-Media: The Manifold Means  
of Grace in the Life of the Church** (2004) • \$15.95

### **TO ORDER**

- ▶ Outside the U.S. add \$5 per book for shipping & handling
- ▶ See page 1 for more ordering information

**(605) 887-3145 ▶ WWW.LOGIA.ORG**



# Aspects of Lutheran Identity

## A Confessional Perspective

WERNER KLÄN

Translated by Frederick S. Gardiner



ACCORDING TO HERMANN SASSE, the Lutheran Church is “the confessional church *par excellence*.” Indeed, the confessional disposition is significant for the contour of Lutheran faith, theology, and church, an unmistakable mark of Lutheran identity.

From the beginning, biblical faith has striven to respond to the word of God by praising him. Christian faith has always sought to render an account for its content, both to God and humanity alike. From Christianity’s earliest days, believers were eager to express their faith in a united voice. Short formulas like the *Sh’ma Yisrael* function as identity markers to the people of God; concise phrases like *kyrios Iesous* reveal their confessors to be members of the Christian community. At the beginning of Christian life baptism is an excellent occasion in which to express one’s faith as corresponding to the basic convictions of the congregation. Persecutions and trials provide particular opportunities to defend the faith against accusations and to bear witness to kings and the body politic. Misinterpretations of God’s word, and consequently false views of Christian dogmas, challenge the church to clarify her disputes and to (re-)establish consensus among her ranks. Throughout the history of Israel and Christendom, apologies and creeds, like the ancient or ecumenical symbols of faith, originate from these situations.

The Lutheran Church, however, is characterized as “confessional” in a special manner. This is due to the fact that “confession,” as Lutherans see it, is intended to be a responsible response to God’s faith-creating action through his word, expressing not only a person’s “private” convictions on religious matters, but also establishing an agreement with the requisite features of Christian faith, revealing one’s fundamental accord with the doctrine of the church. This can be shown easily by referring to Martin Luther’s concept of confession.

### LUTHER’S CONCEPT OF CONFESSION

For the wider public, it was Luther’s appearance at the Diet of Worms in 1521 that made him a true confessor. Indeed, Luther appeared twice before the assembly. In the first hearing, he requested time for reflection. On the next day, he refused to retract. “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scrip-

tures or by clear reason . . . I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the word of God. So help me God!” (AE 32: 112–13).

The scene before the German emperor has grown to mythological proportions. But beyond the myth of Luther as a “hero of faith,” the value of Luther’s appearance at the Diet of Worms for modern European and Western history is the safeguarding of an individual who knows his conscience to be captured by the word of God. With the word of God as the sole authority that he was willing to obey in spiritual affairs, Luther found the steadfastness to resist the threats of the greatest political power, and to oppose the ecclesiastical authorities, of his time.

In this regard, to confess meant not to give in to the pressure of revocation: “For this is the way, the opportunity, and the result of the Word of God” (AE 32: 111). As a response to the word of God, Luther took on the responsibility for what he had learned from Scripture by proclaiming and teaching the gospel as a preacher and professor at the University of Wittenberg.

In this understanding, confession is an act of Christian faith created by the very word of God to which this faith is related.<sup>1</sup> In its evangelical sense, the word of God is God’s promise of salvation, which calls for faith, and in doing so, conveys the faith that is able to receive his promise. Luther, indeed, indicates what he designates a “correlation of promise and faith” (*promissio ac fides sunt correlativa*).

As the gospel recounts and conveys God’s action for the believer, confessing the gospel is the “natural” reaction of faith — faith itself being a gift of God.<sup>2</sup> Faith consequently cannot but express itself in terms of confession. Conversely, this confession is “dependent on” and “initiated by . . . the Word of God.”<sup>3</sup>

So, as Luther stressed in his debate with Erasmus on the bondage of the will, confession first means assertion.

For it is not the mark of a Christian mind to take no delight in assertions; on the contrary, a man must delight in assertions or he will be no Christian. And by assertion . . . I mean a constant adhering, affirming, confessing,

WERNER KLÄN is a professor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Oberursel, Germany.

1. Robert Kolb, *Confessing the Faith: Reformers Define the Church, 1530–1580* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1991), 22.  
2. *Ibid.*, 21.  
3. *Ibid.*, 17.

maintaining, and an invincible persevering. . . . Nothing is better known or more common among Christians than assertion. Take away assertions and you take away Christianity (AE 33: 19–20).

Assertion or affirmation is the positive, constructive, edifying, restoring, and consoling expression of faith which accords with the content of God's promise. So the essence of Christian theology is to be found in assertion, which is "the only appropriate form for theological existence."<sup>4</sup>

By emphasizing the affirmative character of confession, Luther does not at all deny the defensive nature of confessing the faith as an integral part of Christian doctrine. Therefore, confession likewise includes the demarcation of error and misinterpretation of God's word. In order to preserve the truth of the biblical message, condemnations have to be articulated. He added a "confession" to his most important treatise on the Eucharist (1528), which he presented as a doctrinal testament.

---

### *The essence of Christian theology is to be found in assertion.*

---

In this document, which became the source of and the pattern for the confessions that the Protestant territories were to formulate only a few years later, such as the Augsburg Confession (1530), Luther set forth his personal faith; but he did so pursuing a doctrinal and ecclesiastical intention. Obviously, Luther's confession of 1528 follows the structure of the Apostles' Creed, integrating a great deal of the contemporary issues questioned in theology and church:

I desire with this treatise to confess my faith before God and all the world, point by point. I am determined to abide by it until my death and (so help me God!) in this faith to depart from this world and to appear before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ (AE 37: 360).

Here, the contemporary and, at the same time, eschatological dimension of Luther's concept of confession is clear. Far from being merely a personal act of a single individual, this testimonial type of testament was conceived by Luther as a true expression of the faith that all Christianity shares: "This is my faith, for so all true Christians believe and so the Holy Scriptures teach us" (AE 37: 372). Thus, a personal testimony of faith cannot by definition be different from what the one, holy, catholic church has believed and confessed from her inception.

Inevitably, from the Lutheran perspective, the doctrine of the church has to be proved by the Scriptures. As a personal action as well as a statement on behalf of the church, confession responds to the scriptural witness and is defined by its correspondence to the basic testimony of God's word. The doctrinal documents, for their part, define and regulate the teaching, preaching, and life of the church by normative standards derived from the Scriptures and applied to the necessities and needs of the church. Though this application occurs at certain times and places in history, it is intended to confess the truth of faith valid for all times. Believers of all times and ages take part in the confessional obligation of all Christians.

### LUTHERAN IDENTITY AS ECCLESIASTICAL IDENTITY

I believe that there is on earth a holy little flock and community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, and yet is united in love, without sect and schism. Of this community I also am a part and a member (LC II, 51–52 [Kolb-Wengert, 437–38]).

In this manner Luther elucidates the phrase "the communion of saints" in the Large Catechism. For Luther it is of central importance to take seriously the existence of the church, or of "Christendom," as he prefers to say, and the priority of the community of the faithful over one's own belief. This commitment to the church precludes identifying oneself as an atomized individual with one's own private belief and piety, and includes seeing oneself within a community of faith which is always prior to oneself and of which God the Holy Spirit makes use for the accomplishment of his work.<sup>5</sup>

This approach includes an ecumenical dimension as well. Lutherans understand themselves as being at once evangelical, catholic, and orthodox in the best sense, and professing a church which shall last forever: "It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church" (AC VII, 1 [Kolb-Wengert, 42]). Lutheran identity is not first and foremost a special identity; it rather lays claim to catholicity. In the Reformation perspective, to renew the church means to remain faithful to the one, holy, catholic church. For this reason the renewal of the church in the Reformation and thereafter has repeatedly been accompanied by recourse to the Scriptures, the origin and the founding document of faith.<sup>6</sup> For the gospel, whose rediscovery and preservation were the primary concerns of the Reformation, is indeed the same gospel to which witness is given in the Holy Scriptures by the apostles and the prophets, and can be no other gospel.

---

4. Ibid., 26.

5. Luther's talk about the church as "mother" should also be understood in relation to this. See LC II, 42 (Kolb-Wengert, 436).

6. Gunther Wenz, *Theologie der Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, vol. 1, *Eine historische und systematische Einführung in das Konkordienbuch* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), 166–92.

It is therefore of great import to reach an understanding, to establish a “consensus”<sup>7</sup> about what in fact this gospel is, with the intention of proclaiming it:

It is enough for the true unity of the Christian church [singular, cf. the Latin text: *ad veram unitatem ecclesiae*] that the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and that the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word (AC VII, 3 [Kolb-Wengert, 42]).

If therefore the church arises by means of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments, then the following obtains: What is necessary for the unity of the church is that which constitutes the essence of the church. The converse is likewise true: What constitutes the essence of the church is that which is required for its unity.<sup>8</sup> The existence and the unity of the church depend upon one and the same thing: the gospel as the proclamation of the word in accordance with Scripture, and the sacraments as administered in conformity with their institution. Herein lies the identity of the Lutheran Church and, as a consequence, the standard for the practice (*Betätigung*) and confirmation (*Bestätigung*) of church fellowship.

---

***What is necessary for the unity of the church is that which constitutes the essence of the church.***

---

From the beginning of the Reformation these impulses have been appropriately incorporated into the constitution (*Grundordnung*) of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche [SELK]).<sup>9</sup> First, Article One determines the specific place of the SELK within the context of the one Christendom: It “stands within the unity of the holy, Christian, and apostolic church, which exists wherever the word of God is preached in purity and the sacraments are administered in accordance with the institution of Christ.” Here the emphasis lies on the fact that we profess the gospel as it is believed or, at any rate, as it should be believed, in all of Chris-

tendom. Second, the SELK is bound by the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the infallible word of God. This indeed characterizes the SELK as an *evangelical* church in contradistinction to other denominations that give quasi-equal rank to other elements for guidance concerning the doctrine and life of the church alongside Scripture. Conformity to Scripture is thus indispensable for Lutheran identity. It is likewise essential for the clarification of internal conflicts as well as for external association with other churches and denominations.

A further determination that has been effected in the constitution of the SELK is commitment to the Book of Concord (1580). This reflects the opinion that the confessional texts of the ancient church and the Reformation, collected in the Book of Concord, and the truths that they express are biblically grounded and therefore ecclesiastically binding.

From this it follows that church fellowship is not possible with churches that opine that they can retract the positions laid down here, or somehow harmonize them with contrary positions, whether by means of the mitigation of doctrinal condemnations or on the premise of the complementarity of ecclesiastical-theological “concerns.”<sup>10</sup>

**REVIVING THE QUESTION OF  
“LUTHERAN IDENTITY”**

The question of “Lutheran identity” recently has been raised on various occasions. A few years ago, several essay collections on the subject were published by representatives from the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD).<sup>11</sup> These publications are no doubt to be seen in connection with the debate about a new structure for the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), and a stronger integration of the VELKD. However, the deliberations they contain are categorically connected to a basic principle that is tantamount to a shibboleth: With the reception of the “Agreement of Protestant Churches in Europe” (Leuenberg Concord, 1973) there is no question about the existence of church fellowship between Lutheran, Reformed, and Unionist denominations. It is an unquestionable — and unquestioned — fact.<sup>12</sup>

7. The concept already present in the Preface to the Book of Concord, paragraph 3 (Kolb-Wengert, 5) is used diachronically in an ecumenical perspective, but is used synchronously as well.

8. Harding Meyer and Heinz Schütte, “Die Auffassung von Kirche im Augsburgischen Bekenntnis,” in *Confessio Augustana: Bekenntnis des einen Glaubens: Gemeinsame Untersuchung lutherischer und katholischer Theologen* (Paderborn: Bonifacius-Druckerei; Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 1980), 170.

9. Regulations for the Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche, published by the church council of the SELK, established by church consistorer Johannes Junker, Ordnungsnummer 100.

10. Hermann Sasse already opposed this position. See “Union und Bekenntnis” (März 1934), in *In Statu Confessionis* (Berlin/Schleswig-Holstein: Verlag Die Spur, 1975–76), 1:275.

11. Friedrich Hauschildt and Udo Hahn, eds., *Bekenntnis und Profil: Auftrag und Aufgaben der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands* (Hannover: Luth. Verlagshaus, 2003); Klaus Grünwaldt and Udo Hahn, eds., *Profil – Bekenntnis – Identität: Was lutherische Kirchen prägt* (Hannover: Luth. Kirchenamt, 2003); Reinhard Rittner, ed., *Was heißt hier lutherisch! Aktuelle Perspektiven aus Theologie und Kirche*, Bekenntnis, Bd. 37 (Hannover: Luth. Verlagshaus, 2004).

12. Joachim Track, “Lutherisch, reformiert, uniert: Warum das Bekenntnis heute noch wichtig ist,” in *Bekenntnis und Profil*, 23; Klaus Grünwaldt, “Bekenntnis und Kirchengemeinschaft: Theologische Überlegungen zum Selbstverständnis der VELKD,” in *Bekenntnis und Profil*, 38–43; Friedrich Hauschildt, “Existenzberechtigung verloren? Die VELKD und die Leuenberger Konkordie,” in *Bekenntnis und Profil*, 56–60; Notger Slenczka, “Die Bedeutung des Bekenntnisses für das Verständnis der Kirche und die Konstitution der Kirche in lutherischer Sicht,” in *Profil – Bekenntnis – Identität*, 22; Johannes Friedrich, “Die Bedeutung der Bekenntnisschriften für das kirchenleitende Amt,” in *Profil – Bekenntnis – Identität*, 38. Indeed

From the viewpoint faithful to the Book of Concord there are, now as before, substantial reasons to disagree with the statement that the passages of the Leuenberg Concord about Holy Communion articulate an “agreement in the understanding of the Gospel.”<sup>13</sup> Still, it clearly does function as an after-the-fact theological legitimization of the informal union that from the perspective of the confessional Lutheran churches was already manifest in the founding of the EKD in 1948.<sup>14</sup> In my opinion, it has been indisputably shown that this document stands as an heir of the (Old) Prussian Union of 1817/1830,<sup>15</sup> despite the fact that it avails itself of new approaches in ecumenical methodology. By means of the systematic legerdemain of making a distinction between the “ground” and the “expression” of faith it became possible to relativize the contemporary significance of the historic sixteenth-century confessions of faith, especially their doctrinal condemnations. These were relativized inasmuch as fundamental and central importance was accorded only to “justifying faith.” As a result, it alone was seen as necessary for establishing church fellowship, whereas the doctrinal formulation of such faith, for example, in the confession of faith of the respective churches, was said to belong in the sphere of “expression.” This renders it peripheral and unnecessary for the determination of church fellowship.<sup>16</sup> Against this background a consensus in matters of faith, doctrine, and confession is therefore no longer a prerequisite for the declaration of church fellowship; this can much rather be put into practice proleptically, if and because (from this point of view) consensus about justifying faith exists.

As an extension of this formulation a tendency has recently arisen for distinguishing between this and the “original event

of faith” which would “simultaneously” be “the original event of the church.”<sup>17</sup> As such they belong within the sphere of the hiddenness of the church, and indeed as a “work of God,” in contrast to which the “order accessible to everyone [that is, of the church] as a social construct” is a “work of believers.”<sup>18</sup> Hence, the confession is simply to be attributed to the sphere of order, which can only function as a witness to the “original event.”<sup>19</sup> From this position the consequence is drawn linearly, that “the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church (can) only exist historically in the gestalt of individual churches, which stand in communion with one another.”<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the order of this communion should be seen as a task, without the various specific confessional positions of various churches being able to hinder such an order;<sup>21</sup> rather the “order” so understood as “for the one Christendom on earth” is taken as an “ecumenical goal.”<sup>22</sup>

The Leuenberg Concord does not then simply confront one with the old historical issue at the root of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church(es) in the nineteenth century, namely, the issue of the possibility of a church “union” of denominations with divergent confessions. On the contrary, this issue continues to be of concern to us today when we see that the EKD is plainly attempting to make the Leuenberg model quasi-normative for its understanding of church fellowship.<sup>23</sup> Even if it were the case, as representatives of the VELKD would like us to believe, “that the Leuenberg Concord is not a new confession and ‘leaves in effect the obligatory nature of the confessions in the participating churches,’” hence “does not change the confession of faith of the church,” especially since the Leuenberg Concord “is not a unionist confession,”<sup>24</sup> it would still remain unclear how the purported continuing validity of the confessions can be reconciled with the fact that at least their doctrinal condemnations are to be considered as having no present-day validity.<sup>25</sup> In any event, the largely uncontested significance of the reception of Leuenberg is that on this basis “fellowship in Word and Eucharist obtains among the Evangelical state churches in Germany.”<sup>26</sup>

---

Gunther Wenz already intended to have this shibboleth approved in his otherwise impressive *Theologie der Bekenntnisschriften* in note 1 (1:13–15); necessary differentiations, which of course fail to transcend the fundamental position, can be found in Wenz, “Kirchengemeinschaft aus evangelischer Sicht,” in *Braucht die evangelische Kirche eine neue Struktur? 2, Diskussionsbeiträge und Beschlüsse*, Texte aus der VELKD 119 (Hannover: Lutherisches Kirchenamt, 2003), 15–24.

13. Karl-Hermann Kandler, “Leuenberg II über das Abendmahl: Eine Konkoie?” in *Leuenberg – Konkordie oder Diskordie? Ökumenische Kritik zur Konkordie reformatorischer Kirchen in Europa*, ed. Ulrich Asendorf and Friedrich Wilhelm Künneth (Berlin: Verlag die Spur, 1974), 87; compare Hermann Sasse, *Corpus Christi: Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Abendmahlskonkordie*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission, 1979); see also his essay in the same volume, “Ein letztes Wort zu ‘Leuenberg,’” 146–49.
14. Compare “Die Evangelisch-lutherischen Freikirchen und die Entscheidung von Eisenach im Juli 1948, 31. 10. 48,” in *Quellen zur Entstehung und Entwicklung selbständiger evangelisch-lutherischer Kirchen in Deutschland*, ed. Manfred Roensch and Werner Klän, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe xxiii — Theologie, Bd. 299 (Frankfurt: Lang, 1987), 543–48; about the same matter, compare Hermann Sasse, “Das Ende der lutherischen Landeskirchen Deutschlands,” in *In Statu Confessionis*, 1:303–8.
15. Tuomo Mannermaa, *Von Preußen nach Leuenberg: Hintergrund und Entwicklung der theologischen Methode in der Leuenberger Konkordie, Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums*, n.F., Bd. 1 (Hamburg: Luther Verlagshuas, 1981).
16. Eilert Herms, “Das gemeinsame Verständnis des Evangeliums: Das Ermöglichungs-, Verpflichtungs- und Ordnungsprinzip für Kirchengemeinschaft nach der Leuenberger Konkordie,” in *Von der Glaubenseinheit zur Kirchengemeinschaft II*, Marburger theologische Studien, 68 (Marburg: Elwert, 2003), “Zusatz 2002,” 571–84.

17. Eilert Herms, “Das evangelische Verständnis von Kirchengemeinschaft,” in *Von der Glaubenseinheit zur Kirchengemeinschaft II*, 303.
18. *Ibid.*, 304.
19. *Ibid.*, 305.
20. *Ibid.*, 306.
21. *Ibid.*, 310.
22. *Ibid.*, 315.
23. *Kirchengemeinschaft nach evangelischem Verständnis: Ein Votum zum geordneten Miteinander bekenntnisverschiedener Kirchen: Ein Beitrag des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland*, EKD-Texte 69 (Hannover: Kirchenamt der EKD, 2001).
24. Grünwaldt, “Bekenntnis und Kirchengemeinschaft,” 39–40; compare Hauschildt, “Existenzberechtigung verloren?,” 56–60.
25. A comparable concept lies at the base of the Protestant–Roman Catholic project *Lehrverurteilungen: Kirchentrennung? Compare Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg*, eds., *Lehrverurteilungen: Kirchentrennung?*, vol. 1, *Rechtfertigung, Sakramente und Amt im Zeitalter der Reformation und heute*, Dialog der Kirchen, 4 (Freiburg/Br.: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), especially the editor’s introduction, 9–17. [English translations: Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, eds., *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do they Still Divide?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990)].
26. Grünwaldt, “Bekenntnis und Kirchengemeinschaft.” 43.

If one follows the official interpretation of this state of affairs by the Evangelical Church in Germany, then the church fellowship declared on the basis of the Leuenberg Concord has for its part ecclesiastical status, with the result that the EKD “in the theological sense of the word already is ‘church,’ for church fellowship is church.”<sup>27</sup> What was only mapped out in the Leuenberg Concord itself is thereby translated into fact. The final text from 1973 does indeed state that unity had been attained “in a quantitative manner in the central doctrines.”<sup>28</sup> Thereby that not unproblematic “proleptical consensus,” which was supposed to find expression in church fellowship in the sense of fellowship in word and Eucharist, including intercommunion and intercelebration, was transformed into a hybrid “between a mere association of churches and a real ecclesiastical unity.”<sup>29</sup> Henceforth, “church fellowship” became identified with “Church,”<sup>30</sup> thereby attributing a church status to the EKD that in earlier years had always been contested, not least by the Lutheran state (or territorial) churches in the VELKD.

---

### *The defining point of the confessional awakening was the sacrament of Holy Communion.*

---

Since 1973 the SELK has not seen itself in the position of being able to take this path as one compatible with the safeguarding of Lutheran identity. The path taken after the Second World War by the evangelical state churches, including the Lutheran state (or territorial) churches, to the EKD — and to the theological justification of this unification by means of the Leuenberg Concord — has always seemed to the SELK to be in fact the path to the “Union,” albeit in a modified form.

The (“New-” or “Old-”) Lutheran fathers and mothers in the nineteenth century desired in an undiminished form to preserve for themselves and their posterity the sixteenth-century heritage of Lutheranism as grounded in the Book of Concord. It was no accident that the defining point of the confessional awakening, which in the end led to the emergence of independent evangelical Lutheran churches, was the sacrament of Holy

Communion.<sup>31</sup> The concern that forced confessional Lutherans onto “solitary paths”<sup>32</sup> was that of preserving their biblical Lutheran understanding in an ecclesiastically binding form, of defending it in its exclusivity against every kind of false compromise. Thus the question of church fellowship in the sense of fellowship in word and Eucharist, including intercommunion and intercelebration, was the foremost concern in the creation of confessional Lutheran churches in Germany. It was these churches that created a new awareness of the Book of Concord approach to Lutheran principles of the sixteenth century and gave them renewed ecclesiological reality. They wanted to manifest Lutheran identity in the ecclesiastical dimension by establishing that, as the expression of full church fellowship, fellowship in public worship, particularly at the communion table, has as its unconditional prerequisite a consensus in faith, doctrines, and confession.

### THE BASIS FOR A COMMON UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

The confession of faith, which for the confessional Lutheran heirs of the antiunionist and antiliberal tradition had begun in the nineteenth century, compiled in the Book of Concord is not simply a recourse to doctrinal documents of times past; its intention is to be a contemporary voice. A confession of faith is in this respect indeed first and foremost a *personal response*, but a response intended to enter into communication.<sup>33</sup> It is at once an offer, a reply, and a challenge to those with whom I enter into dialog. Hence the emphasis on, attainment of, and striving for a consensus is from the outset an integral part of the nature of a confession of faith in the Lutheran Reformation as well. This point of departure can already be found in the Latin text of Article I of the Augsburg Confession: “The churches among us teach with complete unanimity (*Ecclesiae magno consensu apud nos docent*)” (Kolb-Wengert, 37). Thus the striving for consensus has been an integral part of the confession from the very beginning of the Lutheran Reformation and throughout its history, up to and including the formulation of doctrinal confessional documents, not least the Formula of Concord (1577).<sup>34</sup>

The confession of faith is further taken as a key to an appropriate and uniform understanding of Holy Scripture.<sup>35</sup> Of course, this can be said only with a certain degree of reservation. For the confession itself is understood as an interpretation of Holy Scripture, that is, as the proper, objective, and at pres-

---

27. *Kirchengemeinschaft nach evangelischem Verständnis*, 14.

28. Mannerman, *Von Preußen nach Leuenberg*, 172.

29. *Ibid.*, 173.

30. This shift is a prelude to and intended by Eilert Herms, “Das evangelische Verständnis von Kirchengemeinschaft, 1988,” in *Von der Glaubenseinheit zur Kirchengemeinschaft II*, 303–15, cf. p. 9; Herms seeks to differentiate conceptually between being-one-church (eine-Kirche-sein) and being-church (Kirche-Sein); first of all a single church arises, ultimately congregations and communities of churches (p. 309); hence the EKD would be a “community of churches,” so “church,” although (still) not “a church” (p. 312–15).

31. Compare Volker Stolle, “Johann Gottfried Schibel: Zut 200. Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages am 16. 9. 1983,” *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* 7 (1983): 81–107, especially 83 ff.; Werner Klän, “Johann Gottfried Scheibel (1783–1843),” in *Gerette Kirche: Studien zum Angliken des Breslauer Lutheraners Johann Gottfried Schreiber (1783–1843)*, ed. Peter Hauptmann, Kirche im Osten, Monographienreihe, Bd. 20 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 11–29.

32. Compare the programmatically entitled autobiography by Rudolf Rocholl, *Einsame Wege*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Naumann, 1881); second edition, 1898.

33. Track, “Lutherisch, reformiert, uniert,” 17–19.

34. See Preface to the FC in *BSLK*, 747–48; on the concept of consensus compare Wenz, *Theologie der Bekenntnisschriften*, 1:203–6.

35. Track, “Lutherisch, reformiert, uniert,” 20–21; Slenczka, “Die Bedeutung des Bekenntnisses,” 19–23.

ent relevant interpretation that accords with the standard and central import of Holy Scripture — the scriptural interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Church identity can be historically formulated only by means of continually renewed recourse to this foundation and its appropriate interpretation, as expressed by the “Binding Summary” (*Summarischer Begriff*) of the Formula of Concord.<sup>36</sup> The intention of the confession of faith is therefore to provide a guideline for the understanding of Scripture, as well as a scriptural test for the fundamental insights laid down in the confession. Properly implemented, the recourse to the confession of faith is the attempt to formulate and perpetuate historical continuity by reverting back to the identity at the origin of a (confessional) church — an identity that for its part was attained from the understanding and application of Scripture and that then became characteristic and habitual.

Hence the confession of faith expresses personal faith and trust, a scriptural, Christocentric trust as rediscovered by the Reformation, which then is articulated consensually as a *common trust* that God, as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, is determinative for my life and the life of Christendom to which I belong. To this extent, church fellowship both within one denomination and between various denominations is predicated on fellowship in the confessing of faith (*Bekennen*), as well as fellowship in the confession of faith (*Bekennntnis*) in which faith finds its expression.<sup>37</sup>

It is therefore both meaningful and helpful, not least of all in making certain of one’s own identity, to revert also to texts that are several hundred years old, because they can be and are intended to be a guide for understanding what Christian faith is, what Christian life is, and thus how we can exist and conduct our lives in the sight of God. The answers that can be found in condensed form as the confessional documents of the sixteenth century (can)<sup>38</sup> have a high degree of plausibility even for today since at the very least they offer guidance for communicating faith today.<sup>39</sup> To this extent we can say, “It is essential in the confession of faith to take a public stand for experience that has been gained and truth that has occurred.”<sup>40</sup> This is precisely what the Lutheran Church attempts to do by reverting (not retreating!) to these confessional texts.

These texts are not intended to be anything other than a rendering of scriptural truth, concentrated on the gospel. Here, the

gospel is not to be understood as a collocation of correct propositions, but instead as an event in which God imparts himself, in which God communicates himself to man, and indeed *salvifically*. Specifically, God communicates to man who has broken off communication with God and, for that very reason, is not in a position to reestablish communication on the strength of his own efforts.<sup>41</sup> The *actual* meaning and significance of the gospel, which shines through in the emphasis on its effectualness *in actu*, is in conformity with both the New Testament and the confession of faith of the Lutheran Reformation. Hence the confession focuses on the center of the Scripture, namely the gospel, of which Jesus Christ is the quintessence and the living reality.<sup>42</sup>

---

### *The recourse to the confession of faith is the attempt to formulate and perpetuate historical continuity.*

---

The confession of faith is accordingly not a comprehensive dogmatic work, as is Johann Gerhard’s *Loci theologici* (which is thoroughly in the Lutheran tradition of the Reformation). At the same time, however, it is admittedly the case that the sixteenth-century confessions of faith are no longer liturgically suitable texts, such as the “ecumenical symbols” of the ancient church. Already in the early Middle Ages a development in the direction of a *doctrinal* confession began, which was then further formulated in the Reformation.

It is nonetheless true, however, that the confession of faith, not least the (Lutheran) doctrinal confession, is an introduction to the Scriptures and at the same time centers Scripture from within Scripture.<sup>43</sup> This movement indeed has an unavoidably self-referential structure. So we can see a “hermeneutic circle” operative here: The confession of faith arises from Holy Scripture and leads back into it. It is however necessary to ensure that the word of Scripture is and remains prior to the word of the confession.<sup>44</sup> And to this extent we can even say that the confession of faith is *constitutive* for the church, albeit only in this derivative sense.<sup>45</sup> (For quite some time this standpoint was viewed in Protestant theology as “confessionalistic,” an

36. See FC Ep RN in Kolb-Wengert, 486–87, especially paragraphs 7–8; also FC SD RN, Kolb-Wengert, 526–31, especially 528:9; for Luther’s view compare the basic, highly suggestive study by Jörg Baur, “Sola scriptura: Historisches Erbe und bleibende Bedeutung,” in *Luther und seine klassischen Erben: Theologische Aufsätze und Forschungen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 46–113.

37. Track, “Lutherisch, reformiert, uniert,” 19.

38. Compare Jörg Baur, “Überlegung zur Präsenz der reformatorischen Theematik,” *Einsicht und Glaube: Aufsätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978); Jörg Baur, “Zur Aktualität des neuen Ansatzes in Luthers Theologie,” in *Luther und seine klassischen Erben*, 28–45; Jörg Baur, “Das Evangelium vom gnädigen Gott: Die erfreuliche Wahrheit einer alten Entdeckung,” in *Einsicht und Glaube* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 2:21–29.

39. Compare Christoph Markshies, “Lutherisch glauben und bekennen,” in *Braucht die Kirche eine neue Struktur?* 2, 121–32.

40. Track, “Lutherisch, reformiert, uniert,” 23.

41. Slenczka, “Die Bedeutung des Bekenntnisses,” 17–20.

42. Wenz, *Theologie der Bekenntnisschriften*, 1:166–92, 193–229.

43. Slenczka, “Die Bedeutung des Bekenntnisses,” 16–17; Johannes Friedrich, “Die Bedeutung der Bekenntnisschriften,” 37.

44. Wenz, *Theologie der Bekenntnisschriften*, 1:181–92, 201–3; Harry Huth, “Rule and Norm of Doctrine in the Formula of Concord,” in *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord*, ed. Robert Rreus and Wilbert H. Rosin (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia, 1978), 95–102.

45. Slenczka, “Die Bedeutung des Bekenntnisses,” 23; Friedrich, “Die Bedeutung der Bekenntnisschriften,” 35–37; 42 is not as completely refined.

embarrassment.) But then it must be ensured that the confession of the church is and remains subject to the judgment of Scripture, as has been formulated in a lastingly valid manner by the Summary Concept of the Formula of Concord.<sup>46</sup> The confession focuses on the Scriptures and within the Scriptures on the focal point of the gospel.

### THE PASTORAL DIMENSION OF LUTHERAN IDENTITY

The pastoral dimension of Lutheran identity is already present in these reflections,<sup>47</sup> namely, whenever reference is made to the gospel, the embodiment of which is Jesus Christ in person. This dimension also has the greatest significance for the resolution of internal church conflicts. The Reformation was in no way spared the most tempestuous conflicts, not only with the papal church (that faction of Christendom remaining under the pope), but there were also intense conflicts and heated controversies among Protestants in general and within the Lutheran camp itself.<sup>48</sup> With respect to the kind of conflict resolution evidenced in the Book of Concord, the attempt to resolve disputes in a pastorally responsible fashion can be observed repeatedly right up through to the latest text.

The question always being asked was this: What is the pastoral relevance of the controversial issues and theological minutiae under discussion? What solution, in addition to its scriptural conformity, is appropriate, helpful, and comforting? What is at stake if we fail to take a careful look at this particular matter, if we neglect to formulate precisely?<sup>49</sup> As a rule the decisions then reached were rejections of extreme positions, both on the “left” and the “right.” These extreme positions were rejected because they were viewed as posing a serious danger to the certainty of salvation.

This can be shown, for example, in the articles on “Law and Gospel” in the Formula of Concord.<sup>50</sup> The exposition is based on the premise that the law is proclaimed falsely if it induces arrogance or despair. Hence the decision was reached in the Formula of Concord to prohibit the law from having the last word. On the contrary: In the proclamation of the church it is the gospel that must always have the last word,<sup>51</sup> because the law leaves man in the situation of either persisting in pride or, at the other extreme, of falling so deeply into despair that he is bereft of all certainty about being able to survive before God.

Both these responses to the word of God as law are deemed pernicious and therefore inadmissible. This position could further be illustrated by the doctrine of Holy Communion, or other examples.<sup>52</sup> As the Berlin systematician Notger Slenczka rightly observes:

The decisions of the FC are accompanied in their entirety by a sure pastoral instinct and a knowledge of the truth of the Gospel, namely, that it is not simply a doctrine but rather a teaching that liberates the sorely tempted from their solipsistic self-preoccupation and provides them with a sure foundation and thus a sure comfort in another, Christ!<sup>53</sup>

Accordingly, the Lutheran confessions of faith are not simply “instruction about” the gospel, propositions and theory, nor are they merely an “introduction to” the gospel, but rather a guideline for making practical application of the gospel in order to cope with certain existential situations, preeminently that of the human being standing as a sinner before God. To this extent the confessional texts constitute a guideline for pastoral care: “The doctrinal confession leads to and guides the interpretation and proclamation of Scripture—and that in a particular pastoral context,” hence precisely not in an abstract manner.<sup>54</sup>

### DOCTRINE AS THE MEANS FOR SAFEGUARDING IDENTITY

We can recall that for Book-of-Concord-grounded Lutherans, the confession of faith as “doctrine” has several dimensions that need to be distinguished.<sup>55</sup> First, in its fundamental sense, confession as doctrine means the proclamation of the gospel, particularly proclamation in public worship. This is what is referred to by the formulation *pura doctrina evangelii* in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>56</sup> Second, confession has the dimension of a theological determination as ecclesiastically binding knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) and is in this sense confession (*Bekanntnis*). That is the dimension designated by *magnus consensus* in Article I of the Augsburg Confession and is understood as an ecclesiastically binding determination. In the Formula of Concord this tenet is taken up in the formulation “We believe, teach and confess!” This formulation includes all these dimensions, that is, personal confession, ecclesiastical obligation, and systematic theological reconfirmation.<sup>57</sup> Third,

46. FC Ep in Kolb-Wengert, 486–87; Additionally, Hartmut Günther, “Das Schriftverständnis der Konkordienformel,” in *Bekanntnis zur Wahrheit: Aufsätze zur Konkordienformel*, ed. Jobst Schöne (Erlangen: Martin Luther Verlag, 1978), 25–33; Günther Gassmann and Scott Hendrix, *Fortress Introduction to the Lutheran Confessions* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress, 1999) 48–55.

47. Slenczka, “Die Bedeutung des Bekenntnisses,” 26–29.

48. Compare Inge Mager, *Die Konkordienformel im Fürstentum Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel: Entstehungsbeitrag, Rezeption, Geltung*, Studien zur Kirchengeschichte Niedersachsens, 33 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 33–164, 165–324.

49. Slenczka, “Die Bedeutung des Bekenntnisses,” 26–29.

50. FC Ep v–vi (Kolb-Wengert, 500–501, 502–3); FC SD v–vi (Kolb-Wengert, 581–86, 587–91).

51. FC SD v, 24–27 (Kolb-Wengert, 586).

52. On the theology of the Lord’s Supper compare FC SD VII, 68–71 (Kolb-Wengert, 605–6); on Christology compare FC SD VIII, 77–79, 87 (Kolb-Wengert, 631, 633).

53. Slenczka, “Die Bedeutung des Bekenntnisses,” 26.

54. *Ibid.*, 29.

55. Reiner Preul, “Was bedeutet die kirchentheoretische These: Kirche wird durch Auslegung ihrer Lehre geteilt?” in *Profil – Bekenntnis – Identität*, 79–81.

56. See Kolb-Wengert, 42.

57. Werner Klän, “Doctrina, fides confesio: Konfessorische Foren im Werk Nikolaus Selnecker (1530–1592),” *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* 19 (1996): 2–28.

in a derivative manner, there is the exclusion, in the form of “doctrinal rejections,” of positions identified as contrary to Scripture. However, here it is necessary to understand the line of argument and adhere to it procedurally: the position comes before the negation.<sup>58</sup> Fourth, confession in the sense of doctrine is finally that of academic teaching. In the SELK this dimension is ecclesiastically circumscribed, for instruction is carried out by the Lutherische Theologische Hochschule in Oberursel under the auspices of, and responsible to, the church for the purpose of training future pastors.

---

### *Self-regulation can be effected only by reverting to Holy Scripture.*

---

“Church governance” is here understood as the self-regulation of the church for the attainment of its specific, God-given purpose, namely, the preaching of the word of God as law and gospel, and the dispensation of the gospel in proclamation and sacraments.<sup>59</sup> This fundamental principle is directed on the one hand against external influences on the work of the church; on the other hand it is directed against internal deviations from the underlying standards of the church. In other words, it is not only a question of a defense of the church against *external* influences, but also one of *internal regulation*. From the Lutheran viewpoint such self-regulation can take place only by means of recourse to the church foundations from which it has grown and in accordance with which it understands itself. That means for reformational churches, specifically Lutheran churches, that self-regulation can be effected only by reverting to Holy Scripture and, in a derivative manner, to the confession of faith as its proper interpretation, whereby both are authorities that are outside and beyond the sphere of all that which is within our discretion or at our disposal.<sup>60</sup>

This principle is also manifested in the constitution of the SELK, and indeed in two regulations. First, the confessional determination and doctrinal position are unalterable: a contrary resolution would mean that this church is no longer this church. Second, it provides a proviso that resolutions by au-

thoritative bodies, particularly those of the church synods, that are contrary to the Holy Scripture and the confession of faith, are invalid.<sup>61</sup> These two reservations imply that there are regulative principles that are neither alterable nor at the disposition of the church, not even within its power of self-regulation.

This is a self-imposed obligation of the SELK in the form of a “prior consensus”<sup>62</sup> to which every person agrees who enters into the service of this church. This prior consensus also finds expression in pastors’ ordination vows. Disagreement with these fundamental principles means disagreement with this church, calling into question the acceptance of church identity as set forth in its fundamental texts.<sup>63</sup> That is to say, the church is guided by the interpretation of doctrine in the sense of these nondisposable and nondiscretionary underlying factors. At the same time, the confession in its capacity as ecclesiastical frame of reference is thereby understood as a prior consensus.

Although church governance is indeed legitimated by recourse to these nondiscretionary factors, it must at the same time be discursively transparent with respect to consensus and communication; it cannot be simply based on fiat. This basic principle is recorded in the Lutheran Confessions in the famous formulation that (episcopal) church governance takes place “not with human power, but by the Word [*sine vi humana, sed verbo*]” (AC xxviii, 21 [Kolb-Wengert, 94; BSLK, 124]). This is predicated on the priority of the Holy Scripture over the confession in accordance with the statement in the Book of Concord to the effect that confessional texts have derivative authority and hence do not have equal status with Holy Scripture. This means that they are in principle subject to criticism — criticism, that is, which is based on Scripture.<sup>64</sup> The identity of a church is therefore bound up with the demonstration of both the continuity with its foundations, namely, Scripture and confession, and the “substantial” conformity with these foundational elements — a conformity that at all times must be susceptible of discursive demonstration.

#### OBLIGATION TO THE CONFESSION OF FAITH

Lutheran identity is therefore put into practice by demonstrating conformity to the fundamentals in all areas of activity — in every sermon, in church education, in the training of future generations.<sup>65</sup> It is therefore also required. Thus the confessions of faith circumscribe and define a sphere, a framework, in which ecclesiastically legitimate proclamation is possible.

It is a notable characteristic of the Lutheran Church that, unlike the Roman Catholic Church (even after the Second

---

58. Hans-Werner Gensichen, *Damnamus: Die Verwerfung von Irrlehre bei Luther und im Luthertum des 16. Jahrhunderts, Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums*, Bd. 1 (Berlin: Luth. Verlagshaus, 1955).

59. Compare the principle as it was set forth by Georg Philipp Eduard Huschke already in the early phase of the origin of the Independent Evangelical-Lutheran churches in the first third of the nineteenth-century in *Theologisches Votum eines Juristen in Sachen der K. Preuß. Hof- und Dom-Agende* (Nürnberg: Raw, 1832), 6–7: “A church consists not only in the ministers holding to the same confessions, but also in that it governs itself by them.”

60. Preul, “Was bedeutet,” 72–77, 81.

61. Constitution of the SELK, §25, 6.

62. The expression is from Preul, “Was bedeutet,” 79.

63. Therefore, according to church law, delegates at pastoral conferences and synodical conventions oblige themselves solemnly to the Holy Scripture and the Book of Concord, prior to entering into the agenda; cf. SELK Constitution, §25, 4.

64. FC Ep RN, II (Kolb-Wengert, 486); FC SD RN, IX (Kolb-Wengert, 528).

65. Werner Klän, “Lutherische Pfarrerausbildung heute: as Bekenntnis,” *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* 28 (2004): 81–100.



Vatican Council), something along the lines of a papal magisterium is foreign to it.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, it has to be noted that there is a special responsibility ascribed to the “bishops” with regard to the doctrine of the church. On the other hand, the church according to the reformational understanding is something like a “community of interpretation,”<sup>67</sup> even in the exercising of church governance by means of doctrine, as the power of the keys “principally and without mediation” belongs “to the church” (Tr 24 [Kolb-Wengert, 334]). This means that there is no single authority which as such has a monopoly on interpretation.<sup>68</sup>

---

*Properly read and understood, the Book of Concord is sufficient in itself and requires nothing further.*

---

Reiner Preul, a practical theologian at the University of Kiel, has specified four very helpful rules for such a procedure of church governance on the basis of the interpretation of doctrine.<sup>69</sup> The first rule is *recourse to the biblical and reformational texts*, hence for us the Holy Scripture and the Book of Concord. The second is *no privileged hermeneutics*, that is, no identity-reconfirmation strategies of a charismatic or any other “privileged” nature. For the interpretation of Scripture, as well as for accepting the confession of faith, there must be a hermeneutical principle and procedure accessible to and capable of being participated in by all. The third is *communication between the levels of responsibility*, from the congregation up through the districts, dioceses, church administration, to the entire church and back again—here as well with free interchange, no separation of the levels from one another. The fourth is that at all levels of decision making it should be ensured that a high degree of *theological competence* is involved.

This means that in all dimensions of church work, the decision makers, at least those commissioned by the church, must continue to reflect anew on, and apply to our times, the word of God, to which the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments give fundamental, exemplary, and inviolable witness. In this manner the life and work of the church takes place on the basis of the interpretation of, reflection upon, and appli-

cation of the Scriptures and the confession of faith. For this reason it appears necessary at all levels of church work to continue to take a fresh look at the confession of faith, which is bound by the Holy Scripture as the documented word of God and therefore obligates the church in doctrine, liturgy, self-expression, and governance. This raises the question of whether our churches are in need of something like a “Curriculum Confession.”

#### THE EXISTENTIAL DIMENSION OF CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

A truly confessional stance, as outlined above, is not simply a retreat to distant historical documents; it takes place as the recourse to the Scripture and is thus a guideline for the profession of faith. It can be shown that such a guideline is preserved in the Lutheran Confessions themselves, for example, in Luther’s catechisms. Notger Slenczka has provided a fine illustration of this by reformulating Luther’s question “What is this?” in the Small Catechism in contemporary terms as a “language game”: We can express the question “What is this?” which forms the introduction to the explanations in the Small Catechism, in existential terms and ask: “How does this affect *you*?”; “What does this say about *you*?”; or “Where do you recognize *yourself* here?” For example:

“I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.’ What does this say about *you*? ‘I believe that God has created me.’ ‘I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, the only begotten Son of God.’ What does this say about *you*? ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is my Lord, who has saved me in order that *I* may belong to *Him*.”<sup>70</sup>

The confession of faith functions as a guideline for the act of confessing one’s faith. In Slenczka’s reformulation, the transfer into our times, which has been discussed here and which is the duty of the church to do, has already been accomplished and set down in an exemplary manner. So, Slenczka is correct in emphasizing that the Lutheran Confessions are so bounteous that they require no addition.<sup>71</sup> Properly read and understood, the Book of Concord is sufficient in itself and requires nothing further.<sup>72</sup>

But just in this manner confessional statements or documents constitute a guideline for actual confessing, statements that articulate and make possible an understanding of Christian existence and church life that is at once scriptural and contemporary—purely and simply by communicating the gospel. **LOGIA**

---

66. Gunther Wenz, “Ekklesiologie und Kirchenverfassung: Das Amtsverständnis von CA v in seiner heutigen Bedeutung,” in *In Christus berufen: Amt und allgemeines Priestertum in lutherischer Perspektive*, ed. Reinhard Rittner, Bekenntnis, Bd. 36 (Hannover: Luth. Verlagshaus, 2001, 110–13, especially 112.

67. Quoted in Preul, “Was bedeutet,” 86.

68. Compare Wenz, “Ekklesiologie und Kirchenverfassung,” 107.

69. On the following, compare Preul, “Was bedeutet,” 87–88.

70. Slenczka, “Die Bedeutung des Bekenntnisses,” 30.

71. *Ibid.*, 31; in 1934 Hermann Sasse had already represented this idea against the Barmen Theological Declaration of the “Confessing Church”; compare Hermann Sasse, “Das Bekenntnis der lutherischen Kirche und die Barmer Theologische Erklärung,” in *In Statu Confessionis*, 1:280–86.

72. Cf. the comments of Hermann Sasse, “Union und Bekenntnis,” in *In Statu Confessionis*, 1:278; Jörg Baur formulates it similarly with regard to Luther: “In his theology, Luther as an expositor and witness to Scripture does not supersede it” (Baur, “Sola scriptura,” 112).

# Luther Digest

An Annual Abridgment  
of Luther Studies

The only publication of its kind in the  
United States; offering you the best in  
current transcontinental Luther studies.

Published by *The Luther Academy*

**Volume 18** (2010) thirty-one abridged works including these:

- Karl P. Donfried* Paul and the Revisionists: Did Luther Get It All Wrong?  
*Adam S. Francisco* Luther, Lutheranism, and the Challenge of Islam  
*Jared Wicks, S.J.* "This Damned, Conceited, Rascally Heathen" Aristotle  
*Theo A. Boer* Is Luther's Ethics Christian Ethics?  
*Paul S. Chung* A Theology of Justification and God's Mission  
*Cameron A. MacKenzie* Luther's Two Kingdoms: Theology as a Test Case  
*Marcus Johnson* Luther and Calvin on Union with Christ  
*Berndt Hamm* Luther's *Freedom of a Christian* and the Pope  
*Heinrich Balz* Mission, Reformation, and the Beginning of Faith  
*Neil R. Leroux* Martin Luther as Comforter: Writings on Death  
*Reinhold Rieger* Unbelieving Faith? Observations on Luther's Distinction . . .  
*James F. Mauney* Studies in Luther: Four Surprises  
*John Nordling* The Catechism: The Heart of the Reformation

Volumes 3–17 (1997–2009) also available

For full information on these volumes visit our website:  
[cuw.edu/departments/lutherdigest/](http://cuw.edu/departments/lutherdigest/)

Single volume

**\$15**  
(foreign, \$20)

Any 2 volumes

**\$25**  
(foreign, \$35)

Send check with your name, address  
and the volumes you wish to purchase to

Luther Digest, Concordia University Wisconsin  
12800 N. Lake Shore Drive  
Mequon, WI 53097-2402 U.S.A.

Make checks (U.S.) payable to CUW—Luther Digest

## Inklings



*Muhammad, Anathema sit!*

# Controversial Church Music

## Then and Now

ROBERT MAYES



**A**MONG AMERICAN LUTHERANS, the use of various cultural, contemporary styles of music in congregational worship has been debated for decades. While the terms *contemporary*, *blended*, *traditional*, and *liturgical* are no longer new to Lutherans, still there is a recognized division that seems more divided as time progresses.

Can early Lutheran history help address this division? It does not seem to offer much. Musical styles like adult soft rock have only existed for the last few decades. Since early Lutherans did not know of these, it is commonly thought that Lutheran history has little (if anything) to add to today's divisions over stylistically different services.

Lutheran church history regarding sacred music is a specialized field in both music and theology. Much study has been devoted to Martin Luther (1483–1546) and Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) and each man's respective theology of music.<sup>1</sup> But many of these studies are highly technical musically and thus less appreciated by the nonmusically trained. Lesser known are Lutheran theological perceptions of sacred music after Luther and before Bach. Since this field is also highly specialized among both church historians and musicians, it is not well known what this era can teach for today's Lutherans.

Though unknown to many today, seventeenth-century Lutherans were divided heatedly over church music. At the heart of the controversies was a new style of music from Italy that spread through Germany and other countries.<sup>2</sup> Lutherans also debated whether the secular forms of opera and dance were acceptable as sacred music and how Lutheran churches should respond to them. Both of these issues involving sacred music and culture arose roughly at the turn of the seventeenth century and continued for more than one hundred years.

This essay examines some of the literature concerning the way this new style of music spread through seventeenth-century Lutheranism, the controversies surrounding it, and the influence of secular-sounding church music in the Lutheran Church during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Not only will recent books and articles be consulted, but also program notes from recordings of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Lutheran sacred music.<sup>3</sup>

---

ROBERT MAYES is pastor of Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Fullerton, Nebraska.

### ITALIAN MUSIC IN 17TH-CENTURY GERMANY

In the late sixteenth century an older, traditional Renaissance style of composition characterized by polyphony and counterpoint was common.<sup>4</sup> This older style used rhythms that were “comparatively steady and predictable,”<sup>5</sup> with little dissonance. Music was more prominent than texts in choral works. This older style was characteristic of the music of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina,<sup>6</sup> Orlando di Lasso,<sup>7</sup> and William Byrd.<sup>8</sup>

1. For examples of analyses of Luther's theology of music, see Robin Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007); Carl F. Schalk, *Luther on Music* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988); Daniel Reuning, “Luther and Music,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 48 (1984): 17–22; and Charles P. St-Onge, “Music, Worship and Martin Luther,” *LOGIA* 13, no. 2 (Eastertide 2004): 37–42. Examples of Bach's theological understanding of music include Calvin R. Stapert, *My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance and Discipleship in the Music of Bach* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000); Christoph Wolff, “Bible and Hymnal in Johann Sebastian Bach's Music: A Commentary on Three Cantata Movements,” in *Thine the Amen: Essays on Lutheran Church Music in Honor of Carl Schalk*, ed. Carlos R. Messleri (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2005), 111–21; John Kleinig, “Bach, Chronicles, and Church Music,” *LOGIA* 9, no. 3 (Holy Trinity 2000): 7–10; Mark E. DeGarmeaux, “The Lutheran Legacy of J. S. Bach, 1685–1750,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 40 (2000): 192–96; Robin Leaver, “Johann Sebastian Bach and the Lutheran Understanding of Music,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 16 (2002): 153–94; Robin Leaver, “Bach and Pietism: Similarities Today,” *CTQ* 55 (1991), 5–22; and Michael Marissen, “On the Musically Theological in J. S. Bach's Church Cantatas,” *LQ* 16 (2002): 48–64.
2. There was also a new music style from France that influenced Germany during King Louis XIV's reign. See Manfred R. Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era: From Monteverdi to Bach* (New York: Norton, 1947), 260. Because both French and Italian influences cannot be adequately covered in the amount of space needed, this essay will concentrate chiefly on the controversy surrounding Italian musical influences.
3. Such notes are often a well-researched treasury of information, but underused as scholarly sources. This essay intends to examine what they can provide to the discussion as well.
4. Polyphony is music written in several parts for many voices, and sometimes even multiple choirs. Sometimes instruments were substituted for voices. These vocal parts were seen as having equal importance with each other, whether it was the top line, the bottom, or the middle lines. Counterpoint is a way of writing music that combines two or more melodic lines at the same time.
5. Donald J. Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 5th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 264.
6. Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525–1594) was musical director of the Julian Chapel in Rome, the papal choir at St. Peter's basilica, and other well-regarded churches in Rome. A prolific composer, Palestrina wrote hundreds of polyphonic mass settings, motets, offertories, and more.
7. Orlando di Lasso (1532–1594) was master of the chapel chiefly in Munich. His polyphonic compositions gained him a large reputation as a skilled composer. Pope Gregory XIII knighted him in 1571.
8. English Catholic composer William Byrd (1543–1623) was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in London for two decades, where he served as a musician/performer, composer, and organist.

The new style, known as Baroque, began in Italy in the early 1580s and came to Germany around 1600. Melody was prominent over other parts, though polyphony was still used. “Figured” bass lines were used, by which performers read from a single bass line and played the entire harmony. Solos were frequent, though music was still written for multiple parts. Ornamentations, such as tremolos, trills, and accents, embellished the melody in variations of rhythm, pitch, and effect, and were used to arouse emotion. New rhythms were used, varying from the very regular to the very free (especially after mid-century).<sup>9</sup> The seventeenth century saw the rise of independent instrumental church music, including a new use for organs. Previously, the church organ alternated with the choir or parts of the liturgy.<sup>10</sup> But in the seventeenth century the organ began to be used to accompany singing and even stood alone as a solo instrument. Stringed and wind instruments also were used in a new way—to accompany singing.<sup>11</sup>

For choirs, texts began to be emphasized more than the music. Music was written “to express or arouse the affections—then thought of as states of the soul—such as rage, excitement, grandeur, heroism, lofty contemplation, wonder, or mystical exaltation.”<sup>12</sup> Twentieth-century music historian Curt Sachs notes: “Composers and singers were not satisfied to amuse or to delight their public; they wanted to move and allure it. This was a style to which the public was quite unaccustomed.”<sup>13</sup> Notable composers of the new style were Giulio Caccini,<sup>14</sup> Claudio Monteverdi,<sup>15</sup> and later, Giacomo Carissimi.<sup>16</sup>

Like all forms of music, the new style also developed in time, leaving older “new” methods and newer trends. As the seventeenth century progressed, there emerged an older and a newer Italian style, but both of these were newer than the older Renaissance styles.

In the seventeenth century Italy was a major cultural force in Europe. Italian insights and methods in literature, science, architecture, and the arts influenced other countries, such as Germany, Poland, and Sweden. Italy’s influence then may be

likened to the cultural influence of the United States on other countries today. While there was a strong desire among Europeans to emulate the Italians, some in these countries resisted this influence and still others tried to blend aspects of Italian culture and life with their own traditions. This was how Italian culture influenced German music in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

---

### *Italian music was spread to Germany by Italian musicians who were hired in Germany.*

---

There were three main ways this music from Italy spread into Germany. First, German musicians traveled to Italy and studied composition under Italian masters of the new style. Such German musicians learned Italian musical techniques characteristic of the early and middle Baroque periods that influenced their compositions. When these composers returned to Germany, they often wrote with their new Italian skills.

Second, Italian music spread to Germany by musical anthologies. Some Italian works began to be printed in the early decades of the seventeenth century, especially in southern Germany, where there was a strong Roman Catholic political presence.<sup>17</sup> Yet more Italian compositions were printed in the central and northern parts of Germany beginning in the 1640s. Ambrosius Profé of Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland) published six popular anthologies of music in this decade containing almost exclusively Italian compositions.<sup>18</sup> From then on, Italian music began to spread throughout Germany. Samuel Jacobi (1652–1721) compiled another anthology that had over four hundred compositions from German and Italian masters, mostly from the late seventeenth century, and was influential in central Germany (Saxony).<sup>19</sup> Musicians were largely responsible for which pieces of music were used in church and in society, and many began to use the popular Italian styles for both.

The last main way Italian music spread to Germany was by Italian musicians who were hired in Germany. For example, Elector Johann Georg II of Dresden frequently sent agents to Italy to recruit Italian musicians for his court in the thirty years

---

9. Grout and Palisca, *Western Music*, 273.

10. Organs were not only used in churches as is familiar today, but also for entertainment purposes. See discussion under “Reactions to the New Style in Seventeenth-Century Germany” below.

11. See Grout and Palisca, *Western Music*, 271–76; Homer Ulrich and Paul A. Pisk, *A History of Music and Musical Style* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), 207–18.

12. Grout and Palisca, *Western Music*, 272.

13. Curt Sachs, quoted in Frederick Dorian, *The History of Music in Performance: The Art of Musical Interpretation from the Renaissance to our Day* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1942), 49.

14. Giulio Caccini (1551–1618) was a musician at the Medici court in Florence, Italy. In 1602, he published a collection of songs called *Le nuove musiche* (“The New Music”), which had several musical novelties such as trills, crescendos, decrescendos, and other features. Caccini also was an early opera composer.

15. Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) was the key figure for advancing the new Italian Baroque style. A conductor and composer in Venice, Monteverdi also wrote in the old style as well.

16. Giacomo Carissimi (c.1604–1674) was the chapel master at the church of Sant’ Apollinare in Rome. He developed the *stile recitativo* style begun by Monteverdi, and his influence was felt through several countries, including Germany.

17. For example, see Alexander J. Fisher, *Music and Religious Identity in Counter-Reformation Augsburg, 1580–1630* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 170–73.

18. Geoffrey Webber, *North German Church Music in the Age of Buxtehude* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 52. Regarding Profé (1589–1657), see *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie* [hereafter *AdB*] (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1875–1912), s. v. “Profé: Ambrosius,” by E. Bohn.

19. Manfred Fechner, program note for *Philipp Heinrich Erlebach: Die Liebe Gottes ist ausgegossen; Cantatas* CD, trans. Susan Marie Praeder, dir. Ludger Remy (Germany: Cpo, Les Amis de Philippe, 2007), 27–28.

he was elector (1650–1680).<sup>20</sup> This was not the only instance of Italian musicians working in Germany, nor was Dresden the only place. Other areas that recruited Italian musicians included Bavaria (sent by Elector Ferdinand Maria), Pfalz-Neuburg, and Hamburg.<sup>21</sup>

It is no surprise that south German cities with a strong Roman Catholic political presence (like Augsburg, Munich, and the Bavarian areas) employed Italian musicians. Yet by mid-century, Italian musicians were found not just in these parts, but also in the central and northern areas, where there was a strong Lutheran presence. “By the second half of the century, nearly all the major North German and Scandinavian courts employed Italian musicians from time to time, as finances permitted, including those at Wolfenbüttel, Gottorf, Hannover, Stockholm and Copenhagen.”<sup>22</sup> Even in churches and courts without Italian musicians, Italian compositions in the new style were frequently heard.

The new Italian musical style began to enter Germany in the early seventeenth century in larger cities and courts in southern and central Germany. But the spread was hindered by several factors, not the least of which was the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648). “It was only around the middle of the century, after the end of the Thirty Years’ War, that the new Italian style gradually changed from an isolated phenomenon to the dominant force in the musical life of the North German region.”<sup>23</sup>

Beginning in the early seventeenth century, opera also became influential throughout Europe as Italian tastes spread. In an age before recordings, church composers also wrote secular music since they were the musicians for society. For example, the great Lutheran composer Heinrich Schütz also wrote what is called “the first German opera,”<sup>24</sup> *Dafne*, which is no longer extant. Opera in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was perceived almost as rock bands are today, especially among the nobility. Younger musicians wanted to “break out on the opera scene” (to apply a modern phrase to that time).

At this time, sacred music began to copy the style of the secular opera. Geoffrey Webber writes, “The most progressive church music composed by Hamburg composers in the last two decades of the century was written by those who had close connections with the opera-house.”<sup>25</sup> This was not the only time when sacred music sounded secular. “Although only a handful of sacred

works survive by Johann Wolfgang Franck, for example, it is clear that little stylistic gap existed between his Italianate operas and his church music.”<sup>26</sup> Webber says, “This similarity between the theatrical and church styles is evident in the many passages of solo vocal writing in the North German church music of the time that clearly owe their stylistic origin to the theatrical style of recitative.”<sup>27</sup> It also did not help the distinctions between sacred and secular when much of the early Hamburg operas in the 1690s were religious in nature, though with a recognizably Italian and entertainment-based style of music.<sup>28</sup>

---

### *Church composers also wrote secular music since they were the musicians for society.*

---

The new Italian musical style spread through Germany in the seventeenth century by many ways. At first only a few larger cities and courts heard it, but eventually it spread through the whole country, chiefly after the Thirty Years’ War. It spread because of the popularity of Italian culture and also because of Roman Catholic influence. Secular music also influenced sacred compositions. The question that now must be asked is how this new Italian style was received in seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century German Lutheranism.

#### REACTIONS TO THE NEW STYLE IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY GERMANY

It is reasonable to assume that the theological divisions among seventeenth-century Lutherans might have caused divided reactions toward secular music posing as sacred music, and Italian sacred music as well. That must now be analyzed.

During this time one of the biggest divisions in Lutheranism was between the Pietists and the orthodox. Philip Jacob Spener’s book, *Pia Desideria* (1675) was influential.<sup>29</sup> Yet others be-

---

20. See Mary E. Frandsen’s extensive research on this subject: *Crossing Confessional Boundaries: The Patronage of Italian Sacred Music in Seventeenth-Century Dresden* (New York: Oxford University, 2006), 6–76. Not only did the elector recruit Italian musicians, but he also set their salary three times higher than he set for German musicians in Dresden, with less work involved (p. 56).

21. See Frandsen, *Crossing Confessional Boundaries*, 44–49; Webber, *North German Church Music*, 75.

22. Webber, *North German Church Music*, 49. It is also indicative of the times that Queen Christina of Sweden required in the job description for her court and church organists that all be able to play in the current Italian styles of music.

23. Webber, *North German Church Music*, 52.

24. *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. (2008), s. v. “Heinrich Schütz.” <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/iEi-Schutz-H.html> (accessed 21 August 2008).

25. Webber, *North German Church Music*, 77.

26. Webber, 78. Franck (1618–1677) was a German poet and public official in Guber, Brandenburg.

27. Webber, *North German Church Music*, 147.

28. See Konrad Küster, program note for *Johann Philipp Förtsch: Sacred Concertos* CD, trans. Susan Marie Praeder, dir. Roland Wilson (Berlin: Cpa, Capella Ducale and Musica Fiata, 2008), 11–14. Küster states, “It is thus that the key to the understanding of operatic church music is to be found in a core area of theology—in the Sunday gospel” (11–12). By 1717, at least one person (Gottfried Tilgner) associated the chanted liturgical Sunday gospel texts to the operatic recitative style. Tilgner’s remarks come in a preface to the 1717 edition of Erdmann Neumeister’s *Fünffache Kirch-Andachten bestehend in theils einzeln, theils niemahls gedruckten Arien, Cantaten und Oden* (Leipzig, 1717). See the discussion in Joyce Irwin, “Bach in the Midst of Religious Transition,” from *Bach’s Changing World: Voices in the Community*, ed. Carol K. Baron (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 114–15.

29. Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. and ed. Theodore Tappert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1964).

fore this, such as Johann Arndt (1555–1621) and Heinrich Müller (1631–1675), emphasized ideas that Pietists later adopted. From 1605 to 1609, Arndt promoted the personal and private religious approach in his books *Vom wahren Christentum* (“True Christianity”), for which Spener’s *Pia Desideria* was originally meant as a preface.<sup>30</sup>

Some shades of Pietism were more radical than others. Yet all forms strongly emphasized personal religious experience, sanctification, and the subjective reception of grace by the truly faithful. Private Scripture reading, devotions, and sanctified living were vital. Conventicles posed as “the church within the church.” Pietism also de-emphasized objective grace and devalued the external means of grace.<sup>31</sup> For Pietism, Luther had not gone far enough, and the Lutheran Confessions alone could not cultivate true piety. In response to Pietism, the orthodox reemphasized the superiority of doctrine, the Confessions, and the objective means of grace over the subjective appropriation of grace. The orthodox also upheld the historic Lutheran liturgies.

---

### *What is amazing is that it was the orthodox who tended to favor the new, Italian style of music.*

---

Reactions for and against the new Italian style were voiced through the whole century and into the early eighteenth century. But were these differences in music mere matters of taste? Were composers and churches free to use the Italian styles or not, while still remaining confessionally united in matters of doctrine? Or was the division over the new style rooted in the greater theological divisions of the day?

What is amazing is that it was the orthodox who tended to favor the new, Italian style of music, while the Pietists (or those earlier writers who shared later Pietist sympathies) rejected it. Friedrich Kalb offered this insight into the discussions of the new style in the seventeenth century:

When at the beginning of the seventeenth century the “*stile nuovo*” (new style) came in from Italy, the revolutionary significance of this music, whose “monody” reflected the subjectivism and individualism of the Renaissance, was at first not properly grasped by contemporary theology. Men tried to judge the new music by the old standards. . . . Of course these criteria soon proved inadequate. The retreat from polyphony, the growing importance of concert mu-

sic, the progressive development of independent instrumental music especially in connection with the cantatas and in works for the organ: all this should have compelled a reexamination of the problem of music, particularly also music as such, in the service of worship. Instead of that, the fundamentally reactionary attitude of Pietism now came into the picture, directing itself against the secularization of music; while Orthodoxy, using the standards outdated by the development of music, attempted to salvage what could be salvaged.<sup>32</sup>

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the orthodox (and Romanists) saw those who resisted the new style as Crypto-Calvinists. Pietists, Calvinists, and pre-Spener sympathizers of later Pietist views saw those who liked the new Italian style as Crypto-Catholic. Pietists (or earlier sympathizers) instead wholeheartedly supported hymnody, and published many hymn-books.<sup>33</sup> Pietists (and earlier sympathizers) stressed hymnody over the new Italian style *because they thought hymns could create pious emotions and prepare hearts for true devotion, but the controversial Italian style could not.*<sup>34</sup>

Pietists and earlier writers who shared theological views with Pietism strongly wrote against the new secular styles of church music. Johann Arndt is said to have opposed the Italian style in favor of the old style.<sup>35</sup> The Pietist support of hymnody is seen in none other than Spener, who in 1697 “called for a return both to the traditional hymns and to the traditional forms of those hymns” for the sake of uniformity!<sup>36</sup> Pietist Johann Muscovius said that “fleshly church music is neither pleasing to God nor does it edify the congregation, but only tickles the ears of the world, robs the time set aside for true worship, grieves the simple, and thus brings great harm.”<sup>37</sup>

How did the orthodox see this new style? Before the Italian style entered Germany around 1600, orthodox Lutherans taught a specific theology of music that did not approve of the adoption of worldly styles of music for the church. In 1571, Nico-

---

30. See Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 31.

31. See Gerald S. Krispin, “Philip Jacob Spener and the Demise of the Practice of Holy Absolution in the Lutheran Church,” *LOGIA* 8, no. 4 (Reformation 1999): 9–18.

32. Friedrich Kalb, *Theology of Worship in 17th-Century Lutheranism*, trans. Henry P. A. Hamann (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965; reprinted by permission), 149–50.

33. Herl observes that Johann Freylinghausen’s popular Pietist hymnal, the *Geistreiches Gesangbuch* of 1704, was reprinted nineteen times through 1759, with as many as 785 hymn texts (Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict* [Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004], 126).

34. There were other reasons for objecting to the new style. Pietists objected that using the new style was too expensive, and the money could be better used. Pietists also saw the new style as an elitist fascination, and objected that this would be too complicated for the common Christian.

35. This is claimed by Mienieke Van Der Velden, program note for *De Profundis Clamavi: German Sacred Concertos* CD, dir. Mienieke Van Der Velden (Germany: Ramée, L’Armonia Sonora, 2004). <http://www.ramee.org/0604gb.html> (accessed on 30 September 2008).

36. Spener, *Theologische Bedencken* IV, ch. 7, art. 2, sect. 40 (Halle, 1700–1709), 322, quoted in Joyce L. Irwin, *Neither Voice Nor Heart Alone: German Lutheran Theology of Music in the Age of the Baroque*, American University Studies, Series VII—Theology and Religion, vol. 132 (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 104. It is a curious side note that Spener’s favorite hymn writer was none other than Paul Gerhardt.

37. Johann Muscovius, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 111.

laus Selnecker commented on Psalm 73 that “wicked idolatrous texts had been set under the notes or familiar worldly tenor songs and love ballads were played in the churches.”<sup>38</sup>

In the early seventeenth century, the orthodox became aware of the new Italian music. Friedrich Balduin, theology professor at Wittenberg (1604–1627), wrote in his Colossians commentary that church music should be different from nonspiritual songs in both text and music: “Moderation should be so employed that the songs are undoubtedly spiritual, both in respect to the subject matter and in respect to the form or melody.”<sup>39</sup> Balduin does not show disfavor with any particular style of music, as long as the style did not have worldly associations. But if Balduin is like other orthodox men in the seventeenth century, he probably saw the new Italian style not as a worldly style but as an artistic style.

---

*Some orthodox pastors did see the Italian style as worldly and inappropriate for church services.*

---

Then there is the orthodox theologian Conrad Dieterich, superintendent of Ulm. In 1624, he preached against church musicians who “profane and desecrate worship” by playing contemporary dance songs “and other unsuitable melodies.”<sup>40</sup> Orthodox Lutherans of the early seventeenth century heavily opposed dance music in the church (a view that continued well into the eighteenth century). Thus, Dieterich admonished church musicians who were inclined to play frivolous music in church instead to “remain with the old customary, serious church pieces and not make an entertainment organ out of a church organ.”<sup>41</sup> It is difficult to tell Dieterich’s view of the Italian style from this quotation, though it seems clear that he rejected church music that was made to sound like dance music or love ballads.

Some orthodox pastors did see the Italian style as worldly and inappropriate for church services. Johann Conrad Dannhauer, the orthodox teacher of Spener, wrote against the “new ridiculous Italian jumps and siren songs which aim not at the joy of the spiritual heart but at wanton, worldly joy.”<sup>42</sup> Pastor Wolfgang Silber of Leipzig objected to the new style of

church music in 1622, saying, “Nowadays the abuse in such figural music is fairly widespread in the churches, namely that everything has to proceed in Italian and French manner with hopping and jumping.”<sup>43</sup>

Musicians also opposed the new style. In 1619, composer Christoph Demantius of Freiberg (1567–1643) called the new Italian *stile concertato* “nothing more than a whim of fashion and was not even worth using as ‘bags for incense and pepper.’”<sup>44</sup> As the seventeenth century progressed, more voices spoke out. Tobias Enicelius, cantor at Tönning, wrote in 1667 that

many Germans do not like the Italian style on first hearing it, since it is unusual and contrary to their nature. . . . Although many of the finest German composers were fully trained and familiar with the Italian style, the idiom was not necessarily instantly or easily absorbed by many ordinary Germans.<sup>45</sup>

Johann Kuhnau (1660–1722), the immediate predecessor of J. S. Bach as cantor of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, also spoke against the Italian style (especially opera).<sup>46</sup> Kuhnau wrote a satirical novel, *Der musicalische Quack-Salber* (“The Musical Charlatan”), published in 1700, “on what he considered to be the shallow and superficial trends in contemporary music.”<sup>47</sup> Here he wrote of the church:

An honorable virtuoso takes care not to approach this holy place with any of the vanities which may find favor in the theater or in high society. If he is a chapel music director, he should avoid the luxurious style as much as he can and instead arrange everything with nice expression, devotion and in general with movement.<sup>48</sup>

Yet in 1709, Kuhnau also wrote that “only very few people know the essential difference between the church and theatrical styles, and that in both styles, madrigals can be used without damage to any proprieties.”<sup>49</sup>

---

38. Nicolaus Selnecker, *Der Ander Teil des Psalters* . . . , 114–15, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 41.

39. Friedrich Balduin, *Didactica Apostolica*, 184, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 40.

40. Conrad Dieterich, *Ulmische Orgel Predigt* (Ulm, 1624), 42, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 38.

41. Dieterich, *Predigt*, 44, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 39.

42. Johann Conrad Dannhauer, *Catechismusmilch* (1642), 1:524, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 61.

43. Wolfgang Silber, *Encomion Musices: Lob der Edlen Kunst der Musicen* (Leipzig, 1622), 16, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 39.

44. Christoph Demantius, foreword to *Triades Sionae*, 1619, quoted in Doris Blaich, program note for *Christoph Demantius (1567–1643): Johannes-Passion, Motetten* CD, dir. Georg Grün (Heidelberg: Christophorus, KammerChor Saarbrücken, 2000), 10.

45. Webber, *North German Church Music*, 46–47.

46. For more on Kuhnau’s life and works, see the helpful article by Evangeline Rimbach, “The Sacred Vocal Music of Johann Kuhnau,” in *Thine the Amen*, 83–110.

47. John Butt, program note for *Sacred Music by Johann Kuhnau* CD, The King’s Consort, dir. Robert King (London: Hyperion Records Limited, 1998), 4.

48. Johann Kuhnau, *Der Musicalische Quack-Salber* (Dresden, 1700), 527, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 128. It must be noted, however, that Kuhnau did write cantatas, a genre which came under great debate; see discussion below. However, Kuhnau’s compositions were generally more conservative musically, and he did protest against certain musical forms in the church because they were too secular, even if he was still required to use them. See Rimbach, “Sacred Vocal Music,” 88, 101.

49. Kuhnau, *Treatise on Liturgical Text Settings* (Leipzig, 1709), trans. Ruben Weltsch, quoted in *Bach’s Changing World*, 221.

Throughout the seventeenth century, however, others found the new style attractive and used it for sacred music. Composer Michael Praetorius of Wolfenbüttel published his *Polyhymnia Caduceatrix et Paegyrica* in 1619, in which he “devoted himself to marrying the Italian baroque style to the Lutheran chorale.”<sup>50</sup> Other mid- to late-seventeenth-century composers gladly used the Italian style for their sacred music. Joseph Herl writes,

The new style was brought into the German Lutheran churches in the hymn-based compositions of Michael Praetorius and furthered by such composers as Johann Hermann Schein (1586–1630) at Leipzig, Samuel Scheidt (1587–1654) at Halle, and Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672) at Dresden.<sup>51</sup>

Praetorius, Scheidt, and Schein often used the old Lutheran chorale tunes in compositions in the new style. Other Lutheran musicians did the same, such as Lübeck organists Franz Tunder (1613–1667) and Dietrich Buxtehude (c. 1637–1707), and Leipzig cantor Sebastian Knüpfer (1633–1676). Heinrich Albert, composer at Königsberg, wrote in 1645 that Italy was “die Mütter der edlen Music” (“the mother of noble music”).<sup>52</sup> Still others favored a blended style in sacred compositions, such as Hamburg composer Georg Bronner, who began publishing works in 1696.<sup>53</sup>

---

### *Großgebauer opened fire at Italian-styled sacred music, especially organ solos.*

---

Even in the same city, the divide was noticed. For example, from 1663 to 1674, the chief cantor of the city of Hamburg was Christoph Bernhard, a progressive who wrote church music in the Italian style. His successor was Joachim Gerstenbüttel, who served the next forty-six years and greatly opposed the modern Italian styles of music for the church and society. He also “was openly critical of the way in which opera had turned many people’s minds away from the church.”<sup>54</sup> Gerstenbüttel was succeeded in the eighteenth century by Georg Philipp Telemann, who favored and used the Italian style.<sup>55</sup>

Although some new elements were used in the new style, the old was not completely thrown out. Composers did use Italian elements in their music, yet they did not change the liturgy of the church nor the church year. In fact, supporters of the new Italian style also generally supported the use of the liturgy and the church year.

### THEOLOGICAL DEBATES OVER THE NEW ITALIAN STYLE

In 1661, fourteen years before *Pia Desideria*, a pastor in Rostock, Theophilus Großgebauer (1628–1661), wrote a controversial book called *Warning Cries from Ravaged Zion*, which became a firestorm.<sup>56</sup> In it, he treated perceived abuses in the church, including musical abuses. Here Großgebauer opened fire at Italian-styled sacred music, especially organ solos.

And so that the people would meanwhile have something to look at and listen to in the assembly, the pope has in place of the psalms hung for them wooden, tin, and lead pipes that produce a great din, having persuaded the people that God is thereby praised. But are not such organ pipes nothing more than living images of a dead Christianity, which are to be sure bawl and howl mightily, but have neither heart nor spirit nor soul? By this means he has made the people deaf and mute, so that they can neither praise God nor comprehend his Word, but — deafened through the sound of the organ and the brilliant, peculiar performance of music — are rather stunned in amazement and tickled in the ears.<sup>57</sup>

Vocal music in the Italian style also came under Großgebauer’s assault. He rejected songs that were “sent out of the south and west to us in Germany,” namely, Italy (and France). In these songs, “the biblical texts are torn apart and chopped up into little pieces through quick runs in the throat.” (This referred to the Italian concertato style in which snippets of texts were repeated in different voices.) So, “organists, cantors, trained brass players, and other musicians, for the most part unspiritual people, unfortunately rule the city churches.” Großgebauer meant that musicians chose what music they wanted to use, which usually meant the Italian style with its “whistling,

---

50. Peter Holman, program note for *Christmas Music by Michael Praetorius* CD, Choir of Westminster Cathedral, dir. David Hill, and the Parley of Instruments, dir. Peter Holman and Mark Caudle (London: Hyperion Records Limited, 1986), 2.

51. Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars*, 117.

52. Webber, *North German Church Music*, 44.

53. Webber, 83, 79.

54. Webber, 78.

55. Webber, 78.

---

56. The full name is *Warning Cries from Ravaged Zion; That Is, a Frank and Necessary Disclosure of Why Evangelical Congregations Bear Little Fruit of Conversion and Blessedness, and Why Evangelical Congregations at Today’s Sermons from the Holy Word of God Become More Unspiritual and Godless (Wächterstimme auß dem verwüsteten Zion: Das ist, treühertzige und nothwendige Entdeckung: Auß waß Ursachen die vielfaltige Predigt deß Worts Gottes bey evangelischen Gemeinen wenig zur Bekehrung und Gottseligkeit fruchte, und warumb evangelische Gemeinen bey den häutigten Predigten des H. Worts Gottes ungeistlicher und ungöttlicher werden*, Frankfurt/Main, 1661). See Herl, *Worship Wars*, 118–20. There is evidence that Spener read Großgebauer’s book by 1666, at least nine years before *Pia Desideria* was printed. See *Classic Encyclopedia: based on the 11th edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1911, s. v. “Pietism.” <http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Pietism> (accessed 24 September 2008).

57. Excerpt from Theophilus Großgebauer, *Wächterstimme*, chapter 11, quoted in Herl, *Worship Wars*, Appendix 2, 198.



ringing and roaring.”<sup>58</sup> When Italian-styled music was played during the Lord’s Supper, Großgebauer saw this as Satan’s attempt to tear the death of the Lord from the mind, heart, and memory of the communicants, distracting them with a musical kind of charm.<sup>59</sup>

In 1665, Großgebauer’s fiery views came under heavy critique by the orthodox pastor Hector Mithobius (1621–1681) of Otterndorf. Mithobius synthesized previous orthodox Lutheran views of music in a refutation of Großgebauer’s book, citing Dieterich and Dannhauer. For Mithobius, music is an act of loving service to God. Since people are to praise God by music, church music should be the most artistic, loveliest, and happiest music available. “The words of our text (Eph. 5:19) reveal that this command of God can in a certain way be understood to include artistic figural music.”<sup>60</sup> While Mithobius admitted that church music was abused at times, the solution was not abolishing music. For “figural and instrumental music were able to proclaim the death of Christ just as well as unison singing, and with even greater joy and distinction.”<sup>61</sup> Here, Mithobius referred to sacred music in the Italian style that used figured bass, which he supported: “Thus the nicely and reverently set Italian pieces based on Scripture are not to be rejected, for from them [Italians] we may also learn what is good and use for our benefit the gifts which God bestowed on them more than others.”<sup>62</sup>

This pastor, who synthesized earlier orthodoxy, supported contemporary styles of church music. But Mithobius’s orthodox position needs to be clarified. While he supported the new Italian style, yet he also rejected worldly styles for the church. Church musicians were supposed to sing and play “holy, devotional, spiritual music,” but many musicians used a “wanton new, strange, dissolute, overly embellished, indeed irreverent worldly manner or style of singing” in the church.<sup>63</sup> Mithobius’s reception of the contemporary Italian style of music was not an endorsement of secular church music.

The wanton, frivolous, confused and overly ornate manner of singing and playing, with all too many startling coloraturas and strange runs where everything is fighting and simultaneously laughing and hopping in and through everything else as if one were in a pleasure house or worldly gambling house, has never been praised by honorable people, much less by upright Christians.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, Mithobius supported the artistic Italian style, but not worldly musical styles, in the church. Sacred music in the Italian style was one matter, but secular church music was a far dif-

ferent creature. So Mithobius continued the orthodox theology of music already evident in the early seventeenth century and brought together the two different strands.

In 1690, a Saxon pastor from Lockwitz named Christian Gerber (1660–1731)<sup>65</sup> published a popular book called *The Unrecognized Sins of the World*. Here Gerber listed seventeen sins that were widely ignored (including sleeping in church, complaining about bad weather, and youths reading romance novels). It was so popular that Gerber wrote a sequel (which listed eighty more sins) and several more volumes to the book, bringing the total number of unrecognized sins to two hundred fifty-seven. In the 1699 sequel, Gerber included “sins” involving the sacred music of his day, in which he heavily relied on Großgebauer.

---

### *For Mithobius, music is an act of loving service to God.*

---

For Gerber, the Italian style obscured the text and entertained the ear, but it did not move the soul. He lamented, “Most of today’s composers and singing masters generally mind only that the music entertain the ear; the spiritual element they leave out of consideration, often knowing nothing about it themselves.”<sup>66</sup> Gerber also wrote heated words against the laypeople who supported Italian-sounding sacred music:

Nonetheless many of our people are so accustomed to the music making and din that they esteem it as the most important part of the service, and they are ill-pleased with anyone who would not consider the music making in the church to be praiseworthy and beneficial. But I ask you, in what way do you better yourself from the music? Do you have any use for it at all? Certainly none insofar as your ears are filled and tickled. You say, “I also hear the text.” Answer: But just in pieces and mutilated; it would be better if a spiritual hymn were sung in its place so that you could hear the entire text and be edified by it. Perhaps someone would further say, “I read a book during the music.” Right, then the music making is of no use if you don’t want to listen to it. In addition, it must be quite a devotional reading that occurs amidst such a din, and you may say what you want, but I don’t believe that you can read with devotion, for your thoughts must necessarily be scattered all about by so many instruments and voices. Perhaps someone would

---

58. Großgebauer, quoted in Herl, *Worship Wars*, Appendix 2, 199–200.

59. Großgebauer, quoted in Herl, *Worship Wars*, Appendix 2, 200.

60. Hector Mithobius, *Psalmodia Christiana* (1665), 179, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 90.

61. Herl, *Worship Wars*, 119.

62. Mithobius, 305, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 95–96.

63. Mithobius, 234, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 95.

64. Mithobius, 269–70, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 96.

65. *AdB.*, s. v. “Gerber, Christian,” by Jakob Frank.

66. Excerpt from Christian Gerber, *Die unerkannten Sünden der Welt, aus Gottes Wort, zu Beförderung des wahren Christenthums, der Welt vor Augen gestellt, und in achtzehnen Capitel deutlich abgefasset*, vol. 1, chapter 81, quoted in Herl, *Worship Wars*, Appendix 2, 201.

say, “The music is performed to glorify God, so I can’t disregard it, can I?” First of all, God has never required anything like this, but self-chosen divine services never please him. Second, the first Christian church never did any such thing. Third, God looks not at the external but at the internal; and where the internal is deficient the external is an abomination to him.<sup>67</sup>

In 1703 Gerber was rebutted by cantor Georg Motz (1654–1733) of the Prussian city of Tilsit. Motz argued that artistic music is from the Holy Spirit, not the spirit of this world, so it must benefit the soul. Even if texts are hard to understand, it is not necessary to understand what is played or sung, as long as it is recognized as “spiritual music.”<sup>68</sup>

---

### *Neumeister promoted a secular-sounding church music, the cantata.*

---

At the turn of the eighteenth century, a daring turn for Lutheran church music was made by orthodox pastor Erdmann Neumeister of Hamburg (1671–1756).<sup>69</sup> Neumeister was also a poet who wrote several Lutheran hymn texts, some that are well-known today, and cantata texts used by J. S. Bach and Georg Philipp Telemann.<sup>70</sup> He also was known for opposing the theology of the Pietists of his day, desiring orthodoxy in texts.<sup>71</sup> But, “it was Neumeister’s contribution that he rejected outright the old forms” (of church music) “and systematically introduced the new ones.”<sup>72</sup> Particularly, Neumeister promoted a secular-sounding church music, the cantata. Neumeister described the cantata as an openly operatic style of church music. “Shall I briefly express it, a cantata does not look any different from a section of an opera, assembled from recitatives and arias.”<sup>73</sup> Joyce Irwin says:

---

67. Gerber, quoted in Herl, *Worship Wars*, Appendix 2, 203.

68. Herl, *Worship Wars*, 121–22.

69. See above on how opera played a major role in Hamburg’s music at this time.

70. Neumeister’s hymns include “Jesus Sinners Doth Receive” (*LSB* 609), “I Know My Faith is Founded” (*LSB* 587), and “God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It” (*LSB* 594).

71. See Alex Klages, “Jesus Sinners Doth Receive,” *Lutheran Theological Review* 18 (2005–6): 7–8. <http://www.concordiasem.ab.ca/research/documents/LTRXVIII.pdf> (accessed 1 October 2008).

72. Friedrich Blume, *Protestant Church Music: A History* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1975), 279.

73. Erdmann Neumeister, preface to *Geistlichen Cantaten statt einer Kirchen-Musik*, 2nd ed. (Weißenfels, 1704), quoted in Hans Joachim Marx, “Bach and the ‘Theatralischer Stil.’” *Bach Notes: The Newsletter of the American Bach Society*, no. 5 (Spring 2006): 3. Neumeister also repeated this thought in 1722 in his *Die allerneueste Art, zur reinen und galanten Poesie zu gelangen* (Hamburg, 1722), 284–85; see Herl, *Worship Wars*, 122.

For over a century Lutheran theologians waged a losing battle against the incursions of secular style into church music. Suddenly embracing the enemy, young Neumeister and his companions proclaimed it was time to wage common cause.<sup>74</sup>

So tensions over secular-sounding church music were raised to a new level.

Neumeister knew there would be opposition to operatic-sounding cantatas, because this music sounded secular. “It might almost be supposed that many would be vexed in spirit and ask how sacred music and opera can be reconciled, any more than Christ and Belial, or light and darkness.”<sup>75</sup> He responded that the sacred text sanctified the secular music. As long as the words were solid, Neumeister argued that the musical style was irrelevant. Neumeister’s cantatas became very successful. Eighteenth-century composers wrote hundreds, and sometimes thousands of cantatas (such as by Telemann). However, Neumeister was right in expecting opposition:

The introduction of the Italian cantata form into the Protestant church initiated a lively debate. Musicians took up the innovation enthusiastically and found themselves supported by the open enlistment of the orthodox clergy. The Pietists, on the other hand, saw in the adoption of operatic elements of form an inadmissible invasion of worldliness into the divine service, and they waged war on it of the most vehement kind. In the long run, however, they were unable to hinder it, and so the history of the church cantata in the eighteenth century became an account of the Neumeister type of cantata.<sup>76</sup>

Irwin incorrectly ascribes the cantata novelty to rationalism.<sup>77</sup> Neumeister was decidedly and vocally orthodox.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps Neumeister promoted cantatas because he saw the Pietist opposition to Italian music as a new law imposed upon churches that had to be resisted. Nonetheless, Neumeister’s cantatas took off, and early rationalists after Neumeister ran with it. As Rationalism became dominant, fewer opposing voices were raised. Those who opposed the operatic cantata in the church were usually musicians and not theologians (though some pastors like Christian Gerber did write against it).

---

74. Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 127–28.

75. Neumeister, quoted in Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 128.

76. Alfred Durr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach: With Their Librettos in German-English Parallel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6.

77. Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 130: “The theological reasoning which underlay the new form was not that of the Reformation nor the Baroque but of rationalist empiricism.”

78. Carol K. Baron tells how an anonymous play from 1736 ridiculed Pietist teaching. Enraged Pietists assumed Neumeister had written it because of his outspoken opposition to Pietism, and they smashed the windows in Neumeister’s home. (So much for sanctified living). See Baron, “Tumultuous Philosophers, Pious Rebels, Revolutionary Teachers, Pedantic Clerics, Vengeful Bureaucrats, Threatened Tyrants, Worldly Mystics: The Religious World Bach Inherited,” in *Bach’s Changing World*, 65–66.

One last person to consider is Gottfried Ephraim Scheibel (1696–1759), a teacher influenced by Rationalism.<sup>79</sup> By his writings on music, Scheibel continued the previous century's debates. He studied music under Bach's predecessor, Johann Kuhnau, but did not follow his teacher's conservative thoughts on church music styles. On the contrary, Scheibel was influenced by the progressive music theorist Johann Mattheson who, like Neumeister, advocated operatic-sounding church music. In 1721, Scheibel wrote an essay called *Random Thoughts*

---

***Scheibel greatly stressed the role of theatrical music in creating emotion, that is, music's affect.***

---

about *Church Music in Our Day*, where he advocated theatrical church music.<sup>80</sup> Scheibel said, "I still think, however, that if our church music today were a little livelier and freer, that is to say, more theatrical, it would be more beneficial than the stilted compositions that are ordinarily used in churches."<sup>81</sup> Granted, Scheibel knew that not all agreed. "What astonished me most, however, is that I have met music lovers who like to hear music in secular society but are annoyed with it in church."<sup>82</sup> As he also said,

I do not know why operas alone should have the privilege of squeezing tears from us; why is that not true in the church? . . . It is often said: this or that composer can set a good church piece, but he is not so successful in other matters. I turn it around: if a composer can move the affections in theatrical and secular music, he will be able to do this in spiritual matters, as witness the examples of Messieurs Keiser, Mattheson and Telemann.<sup>83</sup>

Scheibel greatly stressed the role of theatrical music in creating emotion, that is, music's *affect*. "The tone that gives me

pleasure in an opera can also do the same in church."<sup>84</sup> For the *affect* of music in the opera should have been the same *affect* of music in the church, only the subject would be different. The point of a church song needed to be the text, not the music—which could be identical with opera. Here, Scheibel showed how texts from then-current operas could be slightly modified to be used in the church!<sup>85</sup>

Not only did Scheibel strongly advocate theatrical church music, but he also saw its use for evangelism. He complained how a service of hymns, a sermon, communion, and the liturgy would not appeal to ordinary people:

I call this kind of worship nothing else than abstract, because in it one would necessarily have to separate oneself mentally from all secondary concerns, and we would then come into church with the mere intention of reflecting on divine matters and honoring God.<sup>86</sup>

This service did not have "the slightest thing that appeals" to the "vain dispositions" of people. But the opera houses were drawing in the crowds. So Scheibel proposed that the church should use the same kind of music as the opera in order to compete with them. If they did, people would "easily endure the sermon, because they have at the same time already been prepared for it." This way, "perhaps people would not run after secular music so much if they could listen to such well-ordered and moving music in the houses of worship."<sup>87</sup> Even if people only came for the music, they might be moved by the sermon. As Irwin rightly sums up Scheibel's view, "For Scheibel, then, church music has an evangelizing purpose; only by meeting the worldly halfway can the church expect to have any influence."<sup>88</sup>

One small remark on Scheibel's influence should be made. While Scheibel helped promote an operatic church music in the early 1720s, he still held that at least one style of music would profane the church if it was adopted for worship. For Scheibel, that style was secular dance music. In a strange inconsistency, dance music was unsuited for church and profane for Scheibel, while

---

79. Scheibel held to a stream of Enlightened thought described today as "physico-theology." This stream of thought emphasized that God is known through creation and nature, and even referred to nature as the doxological sign of grace. See Joyce L. Irwin, "Introduction to Gottfried Ephraim Scheibel," *Random Thoughts about Church Music in Our Day* (1721), trans. Irwin, included in *Bach's Changing World*, 229–30. Scheibel's later writing included histories and poems about weather.

80. Scheibel, *Zufällige Gedancken von der Kirchen-Music wie sie heutiges Tages beschaffen ist* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1721), in *Bach's Changing World*, 229–46.

81. Scheibel, ch. 5, para. 5, quoted in *Bach's Changing World*, 240.

82. Scheibel, Conclusion, quoted in *Bach's Changing World*, 246.

83. Scheibel, ch. 5, para. 6, quoted in *Bach's Changing World*, 241. Reinhard Keiser was a popular opera composer in Hamburg from 1697 to 1718, who also wrote sacred music.

84. Scheibel, ch. 5, para. 2, quoted in *Bach's Changing World*, 238.

85. For example, Scheibel selected an aria from Telemann's opera *Jupiter and Semele* (Act I, Scene II). Here the text is a love song sung by the female lead. Scheibel rearranges it to be about the individual's love for God. Another example came from the Italian "Artaxeris" set to music by a certain Vogler in Leipzig. The text is sung by a troubled lover who is torn between the affection of his beloved and the attractiveness of another. Here, Scheibel modifies the text to be sung by a troubled Christian who is torn between faith and worldly temptation. See Scheibel, ch. 5, para. 3, in *Bach's Changing World*, 239. It is hard to avoid the connection that Scheibel here is like some modern contemporary Christian musicians, who write songs that could be sung either to God or to a girlfriend just by changing a few of the lyrics.

86. Scheibel, ch. 4, para. 2, quoted in *Bach's Changing World*, 236.

87. Scheibel, ch. 4, para. 9, quoted in *Bach's Changing World*, 236–238.

88. Irwin, *Neither Voice*, 134.

89. Scheibel was not the only one to resist dance music for the church. Gottfried Tilgner, who wrote the preface to the 1717 edition of Erdmann Neumeister's cantatas, said there that any musician who set sacred texts to the popular dance style of a courant or a gigue would have to be considered a simpleton, and a godless blasphemer. See Irwin, "Bach in the Midst of Religious Transition," 114.

opera was not.<sup>89</sup> Yet Scheibel's popular views of adopting operatic music for the church became a slippery slope. The dance music he described as profane was welcomed into churches as sacred music a generation later. Today one might consider that if any one style of secular music is adopted for the church, this may also lead to every style of secular music being adopted for the church (whether that style is seen as appropriate or not).

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Lutherans reacted to the new Italian style in church music. Some orthodox Lutherans opposed this style in the early decades of the seventeenth century, but by the end of the century the orthodox supported the Italian style. Orthodox composers and musicians used the popular Italian style in their church compositions. These theologians and musicians did not break away from the past totally, since they continued to use historical Lutheran chorale melodies in their sacred compositions, promoted texts with confessional theology based on the church year, and did not change the liturgy. Yet orthodox writers also rejected styles for church music that had the association of worldly activities, such as the music played in gambling or dance halls.

On the other hand, Pietists (and earlier advocates of Pietist ideals) rejected the style completely. They voiced concern that church music was to encourage pious emotions and true devotion, that the musical ornamentations of the Baroque style distracted attention from the texts, that the modern church music was too elitist, and that they felt the money could be better used elsewhere. In their perspective, hymns could generate this pious and devotional attitude, but the controversial Italian style could not.

The eighteenth century saw tension between supporters and opponents of the new Italian style, which escalated in the early eighteenth century. What was already a heated controversy became chiefly one-sided, at least among theologians. In the early eighteenth century, musicians argued against the secular, theatrical church music more than pastors. As the eighteenth century progressed, orthodox voices of opposition to theatrical church music became ever quieter, while rationalists like Scheibel forcefully called the church to embrace the new style and make worship more entertaining and theatrical.

## CONCLUSION

### What Lutherans Today Can Learn from This

What can Lutherans today learn from the controversial seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century debates over church music? The first thing is that today's church music struggles are not new, but centuries old. Thus, our fathers in the faith should be consulted. The earlier struggles over church music teach Lutherans today that such struggles are often volatile, since they are closely related to both emotion and to theology. A big difference between then and today is the groups that supported and now support the new style. In the seventeenth century, the orthodox supported the new Italian style while early Rationalists (and some orthodox like Neumeister) supported the musical mixing of the church and the secular opera in the early eighteenth century. Pietists rejected the Italian style and stressed traditional hymnody. Today, those with Pietist views support

the new contemporary style, while the orthodox stress traditional hymnody and reject the contemporary style of worship for altering the Lutheran theology of worship, and doing away with the liturgy.

---

*Rationalists like Scheibel forcefully called the church to make worship more entertaining.*

---

Thus, it is inaccurate to cite Lutherans of that earlier time to make a case for secularizing church music today. Such is what Mike Zehnder from the Center for U. S. Missions attempts. Zehnder cites music historian Karl Geiringer's assertion that J. S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* was heard as "secular" and theatrical by an elderly woman in 1729.<sup>90</sup> Zehnder uses this to try to prove that it should be acceptable for Lutheran churches today to use soft rock and other secular musical styles for Lutheran worship. But Zehnder does not realize that the orthodox and the Pietists have switched sides on this issue from where they stood in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>91</sup> There is no direct, one-to-one correspondence between Bach's time and now. It is more accurate to argue that orthodox Lutherans of that time and today both support the historic Lutheran liturgy, and oppose the church music attitudes of the Calvinists and the Reformed, regardless of the style.

Just as the new Italian style could not unite the Lutherans of the eighteenth century, so also the contemporary soft-rock worship style cannot unite today's Lutherans. Different theological systems seem to favor certain styles of church music and disfavor others. The style of church music is seen to be the fruit of theology, though throughout time the same theology may favor a different style of music. In the seventeenth century, orthodoxy promoted the new, popular Italian style of church music, while orthodoxy today promotes a musical style that is not current with popular culture. One similarity between orthodox Lutherans of the seventeenth century and orthodox Lutherans today is that not all kinds of music are accepted for the church due to their secular connections. In the seventeenth century, the music from gambling and dance halls would be an abuse if brought into Lutheran worship. Today, one might make the same arguments against the soft-rock style, which is

90. Mike Zehnder, "Worship Diversity Respects Culture, part 1 of 2," *Mission Moments* newsletter from the Center for U. S. Missions (8 September 2006): 1–2. <http://www.centerforusmissions.com/Portals/o/pdfs/articles/worship-diversity-zehnder.pdf> (accessed 7 April 2009).

91. Not only were orthodox Lutheran attitudes at Bach's time open to using the secular-sounding operatic style for church music. Bach also seems to have been supportive of this position as an orthodox Lutheran. See Marx, "Bach and the 'Theatralischer Stil.'"

often used in modern slow dances and perhaps even at casinos, the modern gambling and dance halls.

Missing in the seventeenth-century debates are the confessional arguments about the efficacy of the means of grace. God’s word is efficacious of itself. Music does not make it effective or relevant, or the word is no longer efficacious. But arguments for today’s Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) run on the false view that God’s word is not living and active, but dead and inert, until man’s music makes the word effective. This denies Isaiah 55:10–11 and Hebrews 4:12. Music is to serve God’s word, not dominate it.<sup>92</sup> God’s word works in and of itself, when and where the Holy Spirit pleases, without the aid of man’s works or music. Music should be used in the church. But the style of church music should be a fruit of the theology that teaches the efficacy of the word, and not one that denies it. The music of CCM worship does not come from this theology.

Also missing is the emphasis that God acts for man in worship through the gospel and sacraments. When worship is chiefly man’s acts for God, the gospel is secondary. If the gospel is secondary and does not shape the details of Christian worship, one must ask if the worship is Christian at all, or if it is an offering to appease God from the old Adam. The old Adam shuffles the gift-nature of the gospel to a secondary position, and does not want it to have the primary seat of importance, which it claims for itself. If CCM worship does this, then the connection to the old Adam is clear.

Music is connected to the church’s praise, from man to God. It assists Christians in offering praise of and thanks to God. But the sacrificial parts of worship (that is, confession, prayer, praise, thanksgiving) are either done in examination of man’s failure, or in response to the gospel. Praise is always a response,

and thus is secondary to the gospel itself. Music is also secondary to the gospel, and it is abused when it dominates the word by manipulating emotion. God’s grace for sinners in Christ, according to his word, is foundational for worship. It gives worship its true, fitting order, and necessarily shapes its practice. That includes the consideration of what musical styles are to be used as servants of God’s word, and not as rivals or masters over God’s word.

From the seventeenth-century controversies, Lutherans can learn that the cultural baggage that accompanies music is bound to certain times. At one point, cantatas sounded theatrical and Italian music sounded progressive. Today, no one notices the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cultural baggage from Bach cantatas or Psalm motets from Schütz. This music now sounds devout, classical, sacred, and the furthest thing from secular. This music has stood the test of time because of its artistry and the depth of its theological texts.

Is it possible that the church in three hundred years will see the contemporary rock style of church music as devout and sacred? That can only take place if two things happen. First, the texts and lyrics of contemporary worship must survive the test of time, which seems doubtful to the present writer. Secondly, American cultural associations must no longer be connected by the people who hear that soft-rock music. But this day is not now. The soft-rock CCM style is associated not only with the “me-first” American culture, but also with church bodies that reject basic tenets of Lutheran and biblical teaching. Using the CCM style for Lutheran worship today forges an unhealthy alignment between the church and world, and between conflicting and irreconcilable confessions.

There is nothing new under the sun, and that includes divisions over styles of church music. May God in his grace preserve his church in this time of divisions and lead us to the true unity of the faith, given by his Holy Spirit through his word. **LOGIA**

92. This is similar to the seventeenth-century Pietist teaching that the style of music can distract from the text.

### CORRESPONDENCE & COLLOQUIUM FRATRUM

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

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

Michael J. Albrecht, 460 W. Annapolis St., West St. Paul, MN 55118  
or e-mail at [malbrecht@saintjameslutheran.com](mailto:malbrecht@saintjameslutheran.com)

## FREE Download

### *The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz*

Bjarne Wollan Teigen



MARTIN CHEMNITZ 1522-1586

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.

[www.logia.org](http://www.logia.org)

---



---

## A CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The editors of LOGIA hereby request manuscripts, book reviews, and forum material for the following issues and themes:

### ISSUE

Holy Trinity 2011  
Reformation 2011  
Epiphany 2012  
Eastertide 2012

### THEME

Lutheran Anthropology  
Luther & Augustine  
Lutheranism in Scandinavia  
Logia After Twenty Years

### DEADLINE

December 1, 2010  
March 1, 2011  
June 1, 2011  
September 1, 2011

Send all submissions to the appropriate editors and addresses as listed in the front. Electronic submissions are preferred. Long discursive footnotes are discouraged and are subject to editorial revision or removal. Submit articles to Michael Albrecht • 460 W. Annapolis St. • West St. Paul, MN 55118 • [malbrecht@saintjameslutheran.com](mailto:malbrecht@saintjameslutheran.com) • All submissions must be accompanied by an abstract of the article, 300 words or less. Please write for our style sheet or go to LOGIA's web site ([logia.org](http://logia.org) and click the "Call for Manuscripts" link) to download it.

---



---

# REVIEWS

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

Martin Luther



***Martin Luther’s Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation.***  
By Oswald Bayer. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. Paperback.  
374 pages.

❖ In the preface to *Martin Luther’s Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, Dr. Oswald Bayer raises the question of whether Martin Luther was a systematic theologian in the sense of laying out a framework of loci, or in the sense of producing an all-encompassing summa like Thomas Aquinas. Bayer suggests that with Luther the character of theology is rather formed more organically by the experience of Scripture, particularly the daily practice of praying the Psalms and a lifelong “intercourse” with the word and promises of our Lord. In this way theology is not merely a set of theological propositions but rather oratio, meditatio, and tentatio in the Word made flesh—the pattern of hearing and laying claim to the promises of God within the drama and tension of faith.

The finest Luther scholarship will naturally move in one direction, toward Martin Luther the pastor. Bayer’s presentation of Luther’s theology, I believe, captures the pastoral Luther in a way that no other work has done. Bayer takes the brilliance of Luther’s theology and opens it up for a contemporary reader, who of necessity must grapple with and confess in a religio-philosophical marketplace dominated by Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, and the broader conclusions of the Enlightenment.

Bayer identifies in Luther’s work the starting point of theology: the sinning human being and the God who justifies. The foundational motif of Luther’s theology is a “summons to freedom” that flows forth from “justification by faith alone.” Bayer sees in Luther’s explanation to the First Article of the Creed the introduction of a theology of justification, my coming into being *ex nihilo*, and “without any merit or worthiness in me.” Therefore creation must be confessed as an article of faith in the triune God who acts in both the old and new creation as one who, for Bayer, is “categorically the one who gives”:

Justification is not simply an isolated topic, next to which other topics can exist; it has essential importance and is connected with every topic. Justification does not affect just my individual life, not even just the history of the world, but impacts the history of nature as well; it affects all things. It is thus not sufficient to speak of the article on justification solely as the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*—as the article on which the church stands and

falls. Instead, the meaning of justification must be taken seriously in its breadth, with ramifications that have application for a theology of creation and for ontology. In a prominent position in the Smalcald Articles Luther says: “One cannot go soft or give way on this article, for then heaven and earth would fall.” “Without the article on justification the world is nothing but death and darkness.” (98)

There is an especially helpful treatment on the doctrine of the three estates—church, household, and government (*status ecclesiasticus*, *status oeconomicus*, *status politicus*), which provides a biblical and catechetical model for more fully opening up a robust theology of creation. Luther’s teaching on the three estates, though holding remarkable consistency and continuity throughout his career (from early lectures on the Psalms to later ones on Genesis), has been largely neglected, with greater weight given to “two-kingdom theology.” By Luther’s own judgment the catechetical unfolding of the three estates was more significant than the teaching about the two realms. The unintended consequence is that an overemphasis on the two-kingdoms theological framework often causes an irresponsible divorce of the “temporal” from the “spiritual”; the former is profaned, creating a forced dichotomy in creation. Bayer’s succinct and insightful interpretation of the three estates provides a holistic way of looking at God’s holy orders in the world as spaces of freedom granted by God out of pure goodness and mercy.

Over and above all else this work serves as a theological handbook that drives at pastoral care, homiletics, and catechesis. I find three particular points of theological emphasis that frame Bayer’s work into an inexhaustible tool and reference for the care of souls. The first point is that Bayer identifies in Luther’s theology the reformational hermeneutical breakthrough that God is bound up inextricably in a word of promise. The triune God exists as a linguistic speech event narrated by the person of Jesus Christ in his word and sacraments. The linguistic speech events—those of baptism, preaching, and the Lord’s Supper—actually bring about a new state of affairs that has not existed previously. Though this may seem a rather intuitive idea, we must confess and teach in the midst of a theological battleground that still is in many ways dominated by the work of Bultmann and Schleiermacher, who both were occupied with moving beyond the text, seeking either an existential or transcendental experience in the religious consciousness or affec-

tions. In so doing the church erroneously seeks to move beyond Christ our Lord himself and therefore also the sure forgiveness of sins and resurrection of the dead. Second, Bayer highlights Luther's understanding of sin and the bound will, as to its constitutive role in all theology. The perversion of the human will is taken seriously concerning its implications about how we confess and appropriate the work of Jesus Christ. Third, Bayer provides a fresh way of thinking about the brilliance of Luther's theology and translates the struggles in which he engaged to address not only similar struggles but also new ones in a contemporary context with new philosophical and theological foes.

The spirit in which Bayer engages the modern and postmodern mind is not in intellectual loftiness but rather in the wisdom of confession, making particular use of the Small Catechism. In March of 2009 I had the pleasure of attending an international conference on the work of Johann Georg Hamann held at Hunter College at the University of New York, at which Oswald Bayer provided the keynote address. His own work and presentation of Lutheran theology is evangelically directed in such a way that it greets the ontological and soteriological curiosities of our time by confessing the gift and wisdom of God's mercy in Jesus Christ. He speaks to our contemporary situation in a way simultaneously faithful and enlightening.

*Michael Larson  
Fort Wayne, Indiana*

***Desire, Gift, and Recognition: Christology and Postmodern Philosophy.*** By Jan-Olav Henriksen. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 379 pages.

❖ Many books dealing with postmodern thinkers such as Derrida, Levinas, or Jean-Luc Marion are difficult both to read and to understand. This book is unlike most in that genre. Norwegian theologian Henriksen makes these thinkers understandable. Confessional Lutherans will not like the fact that he sometimes plays fast and loose with traditional categories. But for those interested in the impact that postmoderns are having on reinterpreting such categories, this is a beneficial book.

The guiding thread that Henriksen sees in postmodern thinkers is an emphasis on the concepts of "surplus," "gift," or "excess" in contradistinction to calculation, sacrifice, and exchange, which leads to an "endless hermeneutics." This entails three matters for Henriksen: first, what we experience in creation surpasses categorization; second, we "receive" the "impossible" gift of recognition (free of a counter-exchange); and third, the transformation of human desire is indicated and subsumed in the whole life of Christ. No doubt a secular postmodern approach lends itself to skepticism. However, as can be seen in Henriksen, a postmodern faith approach can lend itself to mystery—that God is most mysterious and that human nature is a mystery as well. As gracious, God provides a "surplus" beyond merit and reward, or virtue and vice (6). For Henriksen reality at its core is noncalculable and unpredictable.

For the most part Henriksen offers an ecumenical approach to Christology, not a specific Lutheran Christology. However, given his Norwegian context, a concern for classical Lutheran Christology occasionally surfaces. For instance vestiges of a theology of the cross can be seen in his emphasis that the Word having become flesh is a *skandalon* (15). For the most part, however, Henriksen's philosophical approach unfortunately circumvents a Christology borne of a theology of the cross.

In keeping with his hermeneutical approach "God" is seen first of all as an "index word," lending itself to specific practices (16). In my judgment, this position undermines the ontological realism by which most of us would approach the doctrine of God: God is no mere index by which we interpret our experience but instead is most real, the source of everything that exists. In contrast perhaps a more acceptable approach than his hermeneutical approach to God as an "index" would be Henriksen's contention that reality as we experience it is mediated through history (25), which he sees as at the core of a "postmetaphysical" approach to theology.

In light of Derrida, Henriksen evaluates Jesus' ministry as offering what is "impossible," a way that transgresses our mode of operating through economic exchange (30). Grace encountered in Jesus' ministry opens us to new horizons of experience, such as forgiveness. Likewise "desire," a concept much explored by postmoderns, is interpreted as God's desire for the world and our desire for God (35), a move seemingly more Augustinian than Lutheran. With Marion, Henriksen attempts to think "gift" outside of an economy of exchange. His license to do so can be seen in that God's grace is beyond calculating. For Henriksen this stance entails rejection of traditional, substitutionary views of the atonement: Jesus dies not as a sacrifice but so that there would be no more sacrifices (of victims) ever again (261). In this regard he follows the thinking of René Girard, for whom sacrifice dehumanizes. Henriksen believes that St. Anselm argued that *satisfactio* (Christ's active work of reconciliation) is to be distinguished from *poena* (punishment which is passive). Hence,

because I am the one who does not live up to my destiny as the image of God, I am the negative reason for Christ hanging on the cross (insofar as I am part of humanity's rejection of him as the true witness to God). However, I am also the positive reason for him hanging there, because, as the true image, he loves me in a way that unites me with him in a recognition that allows him to be my substitute—and he can take that place only because he is the righteous one and thereby represents my own true destiny. Hence, I can recognize myself as represented by him. That is his gift of love to me. (311)

In my judgment Henriksen's Christology provides an interesting model for how a theologian might appropriate postmodern categories. Our focus, however, more than anything, needs to be centered on and faithful to the gospel and the Scriptures. In that regard confessional Lutherans will want to challenge many of his moves, especially with respect to his rejection of the



substitutionary atonement. However, much of our opposition to Henriksen will be due less to his postmodernism and more to his default modern assumptions about Jesus' "god-consciousness" (as Schleiermacher put it) in opposition to an orthodox two-nature Chalcedonian Christology.

*Mark Mattes*  
*Grand View University*  
*Des Moines, Iowa*

***Embodied Faith: Reflections on a Materialist Spirituality.***

By Ola Tjørhom. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2009. 201 pages.

❖ A Lutheran of the Norwegian folk church for most of his career, Tjørhom has been a Roman Catholic since 2003. He has served on the Faculty of Systematic Theology and Dogmatics at the Lutheran School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger and has taught at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France. A kind of "baby dogmatics," this book is otherwise hard to categorize. The attention-getting subtitle, "Materialist Spirituality," clearly does not signal what the book intends. Tjørhom is not offering a new version of "secular theology," an updating of Harvey Cox, or a materialist (Marxist) ideology (16). Instead his governing rubric in theology is that of St. Benedict: our minds (our thinking) must be conformed to our voices (as for instance when we communally pray the Psalter) (14). Two traditions seem to flow together in Tjørhom's work. The first is the Roman Catholic sacramental tradition that affirms the goodness of nature as created by God and grace as even better, since it perfects nature by raising the finite to the infinite. The second is more covert and has a somewhat more Lutheran grounding—the theology of N. F. S. Grundtvig (47), who in opposition to the Scandinavian penitential Pietism of his day reveled in a kind of "creation spirituality."

By "materialist" Tjørhom is accentuating three things: (1) the sacramental dimension of the Christian life; (2) the importance of concrete spaces (and not a vacuum) in which God works upon us in the church and the world; and (3) the conviction that spirituality is not grounded in abstraction but in empirical experience, specifically in the five senses as receptive to God's gifts. From the Roman Catholic tradition (and in reaction to his inherited Pietism) he appreciates the involvement of the body and the senses in worship, a focus on the collective and not merely the individual, and faith and reason complementing one another. "Evangelical Catholics" will find much to appreciate in this book, in spite of the fact that Tjørhom denies the *solas* with respect to *gratia*, *fide*, and *scriptura*. With respect to these three he takes the predictable Roman Catholic response: "As the mother of faith and the place of salvation, the church plays an essential and indispensable role in a materialist spirituality—in accordance with the assertion of St. Cyprian that we cannot have God as father unless we have the church as mother. Faith is born in the church mainly through the water of baptism, it is nourished by its rich sacramental life, and it is

sustained by the unfailing encounter with Christ that is at the core of its nature and mission. However, this church cannot be separated from the world. It is also the priest of creation and the first-fruit of a reunited humankind" (22).

Lutherans may find that a number of his convictions resonate with theirs: (1) that Article v of the Augsburg Confession—that of office—is a "fundamental" article of the *Augustana* (136), and (2) his affirmation of Luther's view of vocation as the Christian's calling in daily life (142–43). Countering Lutheran assumptions, however, Tjørhom believes that good works need to be added to grace (40), that the word is never independent of the church (84), and that reason complements faith (182). With respect to other religions Tjørhom argues against exclusivism (Christ alone saves) and pluralism (all religions save) and for inclusivism, that God can save outside of Christ (187).

Confessional Lutherans will read this book knowing that there is much in it with which they will disagree. By the same token Tjørhom does uphold a sacramental theology that many confessional Lutherans will appreciate. His strength is—similar to many Scandinavian theologians—his ability to tie his sacramental theology to a theology of nature and creation.

*Mark Mattes*

***Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters.*** Edited by Donald K. McKim. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007. 1106 pages.

❖ The *Dictionary* presents the historical and theological positions of about two hundred figures of significance to Christian exegesis. The articles span all periods of Christianity but, with a few ancient exceptions, are limited to Europe and North America; the concern is the Western tradition.

The volume is arranged alphabetically, like most dictionaries. This is significant because the first edition was a "handbook" arranged according to historical period. Alphabetizing can be seen as an improvement but the cost is obvious: it is no longer immediately clear what other major theologians belong to the same period as the one who is presently of interest. Although the page entitled "How to Use This Dictionary" promises a "historical index that organizes articles by period," none is provided—the only drastic editorial oversight this reviewer came across. All the other promised indices are provided, each serving its own distinct purpose. An index of articles provides the quickest overview of all the theologians included in the volume, and an index of subjects is helpful, since there are no subject-themed articles. The three most-cited subjects are *doctrine*, *authority*, and *laws*, in that order. This might or might not be indicative of what topics have most concerned exegetes over the church's life. Finally, an index of persons can be found at the back of the book—particularly helpful since it is not limited to those persons with dedicated articles. Here it is also instructive to observe which names are most often cited, this time as an indicator of influence on exegesis as a whole. Those names are, in order, *Bultmann*, *Luther*, *Jerome*, *Augustine*, *Calvin*, and

*Origen*. The two names most often cited, but without articles, are *Johann Gerhard* and *R. H. Charles*. The other result of this method is another note for the editor: the index mistakenly lists *Adele Berlin*, *H. Ernst*, *Samuel Hopkins*, and *William Law*. These citations lead to pages with their last names, that is, to pages with “Berlin,” “Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher,” “Johns Hopkins,” and “law.”

In the front of the volume, preceding the alphabetical entries, are six essays on biblical interpretation in the early church, the Middle Ages, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Europe in the twentieth century, and North America in the twentieth century. Together these make up a succinct hundred-page text on the history of exegesis. Individually they are informative essays marked by a freedom from the burden of explaining any particular position in detail, since it will appear in the corresponding dictionary entry. This allows the authors to consider instead the philosophical and cultural influences that are evident in the major exegetical turns in each era. An extensive bibliography of secondary literature follows each of the articles. A quick glance reveals that this is not limited to English works but also contains French, German, and Italian titles. Appended to the articles on the early church and the Middle Ages are also corresponding lists of primary sources. These contain references to original-language sources and translations, and can be decrypted with the help of a seven-page *Abbreviations* section in the front of the book.

The articles themselves tend to follow a general pattern (context, life, career, important content, significance) but also depart from it freely. The weightiest section is naturally the one labeled “important content.” There the section headings become specific to the article, as is necessary. Two examples can serve to illustrate the whole.

The article on Rudolf Bultmann begins with a brief introduction to his life followed by a two-sentence summary of his life’s work. Under the heading “theological influences” the history-of-religions school is cited, as well as his teacher W. Hermann (no article), Karl Barth’s influence on him becoming a dialectical theologian, and finally his self-given task of “describ[ing] the act of faith as an existential event in the life of the believer.” Heidegger’s (no article) existentialism is his tool to this end. The next section, “Hermeneutical Strategy,” explains the need-to-know terms: *Vorverständnis*, *Historie*, *Geschichte*, and *Sachkritik*. Bultmann’s reliance on Heidegger’s *Being and Time* is further clarified. The next heading is “New Testament Interpretation,” which immediately lays out its intention to deal with the Synoptic Gospels, the theology of Paul, and the Fourth Gospel. Here another note for the editor: only the first of these three receives a proper subheading; the other two have full headings, as though they were sections independent of “New Testament Interpretation.” Regarding the Synoptics Bultmann rejects the idea that they provide a historical picture of Jesus but maintains that his *kerygma* is accessible through them; this is not the same as the *kerygma* of the church, which proclaims his person instead of his message. Pauline theology is law and gospel, and justification by faith understood against the “back-

ground of first-century rabbinic Judaism.” The cross should not be understood as providing atonement but rather new forms of self-understanding. Bultmann’s interpretation of the Fourth Gospel is marked by his understanding of the text’s significant redaction. Here is also the place to mention his demythologizing program—not simply that mythological accounts are discarded—but rather that they are mined for their existential content for the message that is to be conveyed through them. The final section, “Significance,” describes Bultmann as combining “existential interpretation, Lutheran doctrine, and radical biblical criticism.” Well-known critiques of Bultmann are followed by the concluding remark that his conclusions have failed to “command widespread consent.” The article was written by David Fergusson, University of Edinburgh.

The second most-cited theologian in the volume is Martin Luther. Under the heading “Life,” his activity between entering the university (1501) and beginning to lecture (1513) is summarized. Under “Context,” Luther’s reformation is defined as theological and pastoral. His context is framed by late medieval thought. He is described as negative toward nominalism, scholasticism, and humanism. He is positively inclined toward mysticism, Augustinianism, and conciliarism. The heading “Major Writings” lists too many to repeat here. The section is arranged chronologically, beginning with 1513–15 (Lectures on the Psalms), and ending with 1535–45 (Genesis Lectures). The section on “Approaches and Methods of Biblical Interpretation” does not have to do with Luther in particular, but with approaches present at his time. Three are identified, along with their respective goals: sacred page (*sacra pagina*), to understand and reach God; sacred doctrine (*sacra doctrina*), to understand the faith of the church; and sacred letter (equated with the beginning of the historical-critical method and connected here to Melancthon), to understand the letter of the original text. Luther continues, modified, the tradition of *sacra pagina*, and is further, with the Council of Trent, a *sacra doctrina* theologian. Subheadings under “Major Themes” are “Bible and theology,” “Interpretation of the Bible,” “Law and gospel,” “Christ the center of Scripture,” “The simple sense,” and “Theology of testament.” The section “Principles of Biblical Interpretation” provides exactly that: a list of principles. Those are *oratio, meditatio, tentatio; was Christum treibet; viva vox evangelii; scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres; and Die Schrift verbüßt [sic] sich selbst*. The last of these is perhaps less well known; it is translated here as “scripture confirms (authenticates) itself.” Each of the principles is briefly explained. Under “Significance” it is denied that Luther was the first “rationalist, nationalist, romantic, liberal, historical critic or hermeneutician.” Emphasis is placed again on the discipline of the sacred page, and Luther’s preference to applying the Scripture (*enarratio*) rather than interpreting it. Those inclined to point somewhere else for Luther’s significance are reminded by this reviewer, who had a similar thought, that this is a Dictionary of *Biblical Interpreters*, and not of *Theologians*. The article on Luther was written by Kenneth Hagen, Marquette University.

The volume has a clearly defined subject—biblical interpreters of the Western church—from which it rarely departs.

Eastern and Jewish interpreters, though they may have been influential, are not included. A few nontheologians are included (Paul Ricoeur and Søren Kierkegaard), although such an important figure for modern hermeneutics as Hans-Georg Gadamer remains overlooked. It is probably right that very few late-twentieth-century theologians are included. Significance can perhaps first be judged in retrospect. No encyclopedia has all the entries its readers hope to find, but perhaps that is the wrong standard. Regardless, this is a phenomenally useful reference volume worthy of consideration for any theologian's shelf.

Jacob Corzine  
Berlin, Germany

**Theologie und Gebet bei Luther: Untersuchungen zur Psalmenvorlesung 1532–1535.** By Matthias Mikoteit. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004. Hardcover. XII, 335 pages.

✦ For several years now Lutherans have been told by some that there is a difference between a *praise service* with a *praise band* and a Lutheran service with an organ, that the former is needed to make up for some deficiency of the latter. In the same way they have been told that there is a difference between a *contemporary service* and a *liturgical service*, the former again supplying what the latter lacks, namely, informality, casualness, and spontaneity. The argument has been made that while the latter services may be good and fine for those who have been life-long members of Lutheran congregations, the former are especially suited for drawing unbelievers into the Lutheran fold.

Students of the phenomenon *contemporary service* quickly notice, however, that the alternative between it and *liturgical service* is a false one because *contemporary services* also use a *liturgy*, that is, an orderly, relatively predictable sequence of events to fill a certain amount of time, complete with its specific dress code for “worship leaders” and led alike. It is just a different liturgy, a liturgy first developed in nondenominational, Evangelical, Pentecostal circles growing out of the Christian hippie movement and hence publicly associated chiefly with these groups. To say the least, the Book of Concord certainly cautions its subscribers against adopting even essentially indifferent liturgical forms from socially and political dominant church bodies without first reaching a sound theological agreement with them (SD x, 5, 10).

If the alternative is a liturgy with its typical constraints of human freedom to enable corporate action after all, Lutherans are, therefore, right in asking why they should adopt a liturgy that was developed based on theological premises foreign to Lutheran doctrine and that, therefore, also publicly confesses a non-Lutheran theology. The argument that seeks to separate Lutheran *substance* from Evangelical or even Apostolic *style* is really not possible for Lutherans, as for the reformers, for whom, as their name suggests, the meaning, the substance was in the concrete style or the specific form of the service; it

did not exist in some disembodied, formless state. Change the form and you change the substance, one could well say. And the Reformation was also about undoing godless deformations that had crept into the public worship of the Christian church.

Mikoteit's fine foundational study addresses the first alternative and shows that it too is flawed. *Praise* is not something lacking in the Lutheran service. It has been always there, clearly visible and audible for those with eyes to see and ears to hear. Again, we are thus talking not about “to praise or not to praise” but about two different kinds of praise, one growing out of Luther's biblical theology and the other growing out of more recent theological movements.

In his 2003 dissertation, written under Dr. Martin Brecht, Münster, Mikoteit examines Luther's third lecture on the Psalms, held between 1532 and 1535 and covering Psalms 2, 51, 45, 120–134, and 90. Some parts of this lecture have been translated into English in the American edition of *Luther's Works*. Luther's 1532 expositions of Psalms 2, 51, and 45 are contained in AE 12; the 1534/35 exposition of Psalm 90 is contained in AE 13. The remainder of the lecture, the group of fifteen psalms known as Gradual Psalms or Songs of Ascent, is scheduled to appear in the extension to this edition that is currently being published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri.

Some of Mikoteit's pertinent findings are these: first, prayer and praise before Luther's rediscovery of the biblical gospel were either legalistic works or contemplative-mystic experiences. They sought to reach God on man's own terms, either to assert one's righteousness and piety before him or to become one with him (theology of glory). Luther's evangelical insight also had a major impact on his piety and prayer life; it led to the evangelical, gospel-centered piety and prayer life of the Lutheran church. Praying, praising, and thanksgiving continued to be good works, commanded by the Second Commandment (SC I, 4); yet they lost their meritorious, mystical character. No longer forced to serve man's quest for self-justification and self-deification, these primary fruits of faith were now set free to serve the neighbor as well, as works of those already justified by faith in Christ alone.

Interestingly, and quite consistent with the basic Reformation insight, God is chiefly praised and thanked, according to Luther, when the pure gospel of Christ is proclaimed and taught (117), either in sermons or in public prayers that serve the edification of the neighbor (296). For Luther, teaching Christian theology is praising and thanking God (301). Accordingly, to the three classic (Melancthonian) aspects of faith — *notitia*, *assensus*, *fiducia* — thanksgiving needs to be added, as Mikoteit shows (292). It too is an aspect of faith; that is, he who believes in the gospel not only lets God be God, but in this he also thanks God for his grace in Christ, which is the primary and chief expression of his being God and Lord (cf. LC I, 1–4; I, 27). Giving thanks to God for Christ is intimately connected to receiving Christ by faith, as the sequence from First to Second Commandment suggests. Created by the word of promise, faith is not mute but freely sings God's praise and thanksgiving.

If teaching the pure gospel is the positive aspect of thanking and praising God then confessing one's sin and unworthi-

ness is its negative aspect. As Mikoteit demonstrates, for Luther confession too is an important form of thanking and praising God because here, according to Psalm 51:4 and Romans 3:4, the dark backdrop for God's bright grace in Christ is enunciated. In other words, here thanks is given to God, not for the gospel, but for the gift of his law that leads man to proper self-knowledge and to despairing of his own powers (244). For Luther the confession of sins was connected with the request for forgiveness and grace (cf. only SC IV, 22). It is this combination of confession and supplication that resulted in a sacrifice of praise. Additionally Mikoteit points out that the typical sequence from praise and supplication in prayers authored by Luther (see only SC VII, 2, 5, Luther's morning and evening prayers) is grounded in the doctrine of justification itself (264).

There is a final aspect of praising and thanking God in Luther's theology, and that is the life of the justified lived out in his vocations according to the Second Table of the Ten Commandments. Due to its nonverbal character, its responsorial testimony to the gift of God's grace in Christ is less clear and uniquely Christian than its verbal proclamation in prayer and preaching, but it is nonetheless not optional; in a sense living in one's vocation represents the fullest expression of a believer's gratitude, his profoundest prayer and praise in that here he not only offers back to God words but his whole life (cf. only SC II, 2, 4 and esp. Ap xxiv, 25–27).

Given these findings we can return to the initial problem, the assertion of some that Lutherans need special "praise services" to praise God more or better than is done in the typical Lutheran service. Against the backdrop of Luther's theology of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving this assertion is to be rejected as groundless. The typical Lutheran service—from the invocation of the triune name to the triune blessing at the end, with its rite of confession and absolution, with its Scripture lessons, with its prayers of thanksgiving and supplication, with its preaching of God's law and gospel, with its confession of the Christian faith in creed and song, with its administration of the sacrament of the altar—from beginning to end is one big service of praise and thanksgiving to God. In fact it is a praise service chiefly in the indicative, not in the imperative only.

In other words, in the Lutheran service, the worshipers are not constantly merely exhorted and commanded to "praise the Lord!" (*hallelujah*); here worshipers are given, and give to each other, the gospel gifts. And this giving is in itself their chief act of praise, the "chief worship," as the Confessions call it (Ap xv, 42), corresponding precisely to receiving faith (Ap iv, 310). Praising God is thus not a means of grace, the experiential, ecstatic ladder of ascent out of a fallen creation into God's presence, or even essence, of unadulterated bliss, as this has been the case in mystical movements ancient and modern. Rather the God-given creaturely means of grace rightly used are also the human creatures' primary means of praising God (their secondary means of praise being their Second Table good works that also serve fellow creatures in creation by fellow God-given creatures). To put it pointedly the Lutheran service (also in its daily-life forms) is centered on, and flows from, God's gift to man, not on man's gifts to God (LC II, 54–55).

Yet this indicative gospel service, unlike the imperative law service, is possible only when and where there is agreement and unanimity in the gospel and all its articles. As Luther put it, it is the Creed, as summary of the gospel, not the Ten Commandments, as the summary of the natural law common to all men, that makes us Christians (LC II, 66–69). It therefore sets our praise and thanksgiving apart from all the thanking and praising that is going on in the world's many religions, and it does so both in the worshiper's heart (faith) and in his words (gospel). The question is thus again not whether one should praise God or not—"There has never been a people so wicked that it did not establish and maintain some sort of worship [and praise of some god]" (LC I, 17)—but how one should praise the one true God.

*Holger Sonntag*  
*Hiram, Ohio*

*Christliche Gebet für alle Not Vnd Stende der Gantzen Christenheit (1567)*. By Johann Habermann (Johannes Avenarius). Critically edited, commented, provided with an epilogue by Johann Anselm Steiger with cooperation by Corinna Flügge. *Doctrina et Pietas*, Abteilung II, Band 4. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2009. 428 pages.

✧ Eight years after the publication of a study on Johann Habermann's theology of prayer by retired Hamburg systematic theologian Traugott Koch,<sup>1</sup> his colleague Johann Anselm Steiger, teaching at the same university, has succeeded in publishing the first critical edition of Habermann's famous prayer book, which has shaped the spirituality of Lutheran churches throughout the centuries, as can be seen even in present-day Lutheran hymnals and agendas. Koch, in his research on Habermann, showed that the insights of the Lutheran Reformation were effective in developing a profound theology and practice of prayer. Thus Koch was able to refute the hypothesis of Paul Althaus Sr. (1861–1925), who had claimed that Lutheran prayer practice did not so much grow out of Reformation theology but was dependent on Roman Catholic sources.

Progress in historical research is built on two pillars: new research on long-neglected topics, and reprints of the long-forgotten sources which had been most influential in past epochs of church history. Therefore, despite the very high price of this and also of the recent volumes of Steiger's "Doctrina et Pietas" series with its two subdivisions (I. Works of John Gerhard, and II. "Varia," of which the book at hand is the newest piece), the editorial work displayed here has to be considered a great gift for Lutheran church and theology.

1. See my review of Johann Habermann's "Betbüchlein" im Zusammenhang seiner Theologie: Eine Studie zur Gebetsliteratur und zur Theologie des Luthertums im 16. Jahrhundert, by Traugott Koch, *Lutherische Beiträge* 10 (2005): 256–58.

Habermann was born in 1516 and served as a pastor in Saxony and as a professor of Hebrew in Jena. After the defeat of Crypto-Calvinism he was called to be a professor at Wittenberg University, but Andreae and Selnecker instead installed him to be superintendent of Naumburg and Zeitz in 1576. His prayer book was first published in 1567. It can be read both as a book that shaped Lutheran spirituality for the centuries to come and as a mirror of its author's own prayer life. According to Steiger, Habermann's prayer book has to be considered the most successful Lutheran prayer book in history. It was more widespread in editions and in use than Johann Arndt's *Paradiesgärtlein*. Habermann's style is much less "bloomy" and "baroque" than Arndt's. As a result Habermann's prayers are much more timeless. This might be due to the fact that the language and style of his prayers are very closely related to the language and style of Luther's Bible translation and of his catechisms. During Habermann's lifetime his prayer book was translated into Latin and Greek and later on also into Hungarian, Danish, lower German, English, French, Bohemian, Romansh,<sup>2</sup> Swedish, and Icelandic. Part of this unique publication history is the fact that between 1579 and 1610 alone, three different English versions were published. One of these versions, translated on the basis of Habermann's Latin version, experienced sixteen reprints until 1625. Another English translation was based on the French translation.

This broad international and interdenominational history of publication of this work is an indirect proof that the reader will find hardly any material aspect of Christian prayer missing in Habermann's work. It is both extensive and intensive, comprising two major parts: (1) prayers for each day of the week, and (2) prayers for certain persons (estates) or occasions. The prayer book could be used for the everyday prayer life of individual Christians as well as for the common prayer life of congregations and churches. Thus it served as a faithful spiritual companion for meeting all the needs of a Christian life as well as for preparing for death and eternity.

For this critical edition Steiger compared five versions of Habermann's prayer book, two of which are printed in parallel. Additional alternative versions can be found in the footnotes of each page. The critical apparatus also gives references to biblical texts and to other sources, especially to texts by Luther. Concerning the biblical references it is my impression that the Pastoral Letters were neglected in some cases, where references to them are quite obvious, which is surprising if one considers the most important role they play for New Testament theology and practice of prayer. Habermann himself helped the reader to find his way by preparing an index of the topics of all prayers. Eight prayers are assigned for each day of the week, starting with a morning blessing (*Morgensegen*), followed by a prayer of thanksgiving, four prayers asking for divine benefits, one prayer against specific enemies (false teaching, the "Turk," the enemies of the gospel, the devil, the world's temptation, the flesh, despair) and an evening blessing (*Abendsegen*). This in-

dex is followed by an appendix which presents Habermann's dedicatory preface to Dorothea, duchess of Saxony, for the 1574 Leipzig edition. In this preface Habermann explains the intention of his book, namely, developing a concise theology of prayer on the basis of 1 Timothy 2:1–8, Luke 1:1, and Philippians 4:6 (prayer as petition in need, prayer as asking for spiritual and timely gifts for this life and the life to come, intercessions for ourselves and for our neighbors in the orders of this world, and thanksgiving and praise of God for all the benefits he has shown to us). For the manifold order of daily prayer Habermann relies on David (Ps 119:164). The benefits of prayer are put forth with the help of hints to James 5:15 and 2 Kings 19 and 20.

Another addendum from the 1574 Leipzig edition is the wonderful hymn by Paul Eber, "Herr Jesu Christ, wahr' Mensch und Gott" ("Lord Jesus Christ, true man and God"), which serves as preparation for dying. Steiger also added the edition of those prayers from Michael Caelius's (1492–1559) prayer book from 1550, which were used and adapted by Habermann (365–373). The concluding index of Bible passages is followed by Steiger's instructive editorial report, in which he discusses his text-critical decisions and gives an introduction to Habermann's biography and to the history of his prayer book, including synoptic expositions of prayer topics which reveal Habermann's theological composition principles. Most important is the observation that Habermann saw the necessity to add a prayer against the Turkish (that is, Muslim) threat to Christendom and prayers concerning confession and absolution as well as preparatory communion prayers and prayers for the sick compared to an earlier shorter version of the prayer book which left these topics out.

To be sure most of Habermann's prayers can be prayed even today with some minor adjustments in language and style. The prayers for the weekdays cover more or less all relevant topics of the Creed or of a Christian dogmatics. Very often these prayers are composed as a respective compilation of most of the relevant Bible passages concerning a certain topic or *locus doctrinae*. Thus this prayer book can even serve as an excellent historical and theological source book for all important loci of Christian dogmatics. After all, the principle *lex credendi, lex orandi* does not only apply to the divine liturgy of the church but also to her everyday prayer life. Or we should better say: the everyday prayer life of the church is part of the divine liturgy, shaped by the Scriptures, as they are summarized in the Confessions, catechisms, and hymns of the church.

Whereas Habermann's daily prayers cover the whole of Christian doctrine, the prayers specified for certain persons, estates, and occasions cover the Christian life or ethics. These prayers follow the biblical and confessional "Table of Duties" according to the doctrine of the three orders or estates. Thus we find impressive prayers for both the pastor (*Seelsorger*) and the parishioner (*Pfarrkind*); for the government (*Obrigkeith*) and for those over which it rules (*Unterthanen*); for husbands and for wives; for children and for servants; for adolescents, for pregnant women, for widows, for travellers (*Wanderer*); for those fighting temptations, for times of thunderstorms, for times of epidemics (*Pestilenz*). Many of these prayers make use of biblical examples

2. "Romansh" is one of the four official languages of Switzerland (along with Italian, French, and German).

for the respective order or situation. These prayers serve as a wonderful proof of how rich the practical hermeneutics of the Scriptures in the Lutheran church is and how many and how deep implications it has for the life of the Christians.

Thus another long-forgotten but nevertheless most important and relevant source of Lutheran piety and spirituality is available for the church and theology of our age. Not only church historians will benefit from this source, but Habermann's prayer book displays material and formal criteria for the prayer life of the church of all ages. The author himself stresses the importance of an intense, biblically informed prayer life, especially for Christians living in the end times.

There is no doubt that we are closer to the second coming of Christ than Habermann was. Consequently it is impossible that we could get along with less or worse spiritual food than our forefathers did. There is no reason to take refuge in spiritual fast food when the table of our Lutheran heritage is filled with an overabundant wealth of spiritual goods, among which Habermann's prayers have a most prominent position.

*Armin Wenz  
St. John's Lutheran Church  
Oberursel, Germany*

## BRIEFLY NOTED

***The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Church***, vol. 7, *Our Own Time*. By Hughes Oliphant Old. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 714 pages.

With this volume a noted Presbyterian scholar of theology and worship brings his monumental history of preaching to a conclusion. Dealing with still living or recently deceased preachers, Old chronicles the work of mainline denominational preachers such as William Sloane Coffin Jr., Fred Craddock, and William Willimon. Notably absent are Eugene Peterson, Thomas Long, and David Buttrick. Chapters are included on African and Asian preaching. Billy Graham is appropriately allotted a chapter of his own. The "New Breed" Presbyterian preachers (Calvin Thielman, Earl Palmer, John Huffman, and so forth) get a chapter. Lacking is a treatment of significant contemporary American Lutheran preachers, such as Richard Lischer, Gerhard Forde, Herman Stuempfle, or Oswald Hoffmann. Chapters are devoted to the preachers of liberation theology, American Roman Catholic preaching since Vatican II, Black preaching, charismatic preaching, megachurch preaching, and contemporary British preaching. Absent is a consideration of continental European preaching such as that of Ernst Käsemann or the homiletics of Rudolf Bohren. While his history is selective, Old has listened to, read, and thoughtfully and sympathetically commented on a great array of sermons and preachers.

***Theology of the New Testament***. By Udo Schnelle. Translated by M. Eugene Boring. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2009. 910 pages.

Udo Schnelle, professor of New Testament at Halle, is well-known to English speaking audiences through his work on Paul and John. This volume represents a comprehensive engagement with current German and English New Testament exegetical research. Overall, Schnelle accepts the results of critical scholarship regarding dating and authorship but he is not uncritical of the critics. For example, Schnelle writes: "The truth claim of these texts is not to be avoided, for 'truth' is meaning that makes a binding claim. The goal is not a gutted Christian house, but an appreciation of this house that perceives its architecture, the load-bearing floors and walls, the doors and stairways that create connections between its components, and the windows that make it possible to look outside. At the same time, focusing on the category *meaning* opens to theology the possibility of entering into critical discourse with other academic disciplines devoted to meaning and truth, and doing so on the basis of its own normative tradition" (27). He seeks to set forth the theology, Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, anthropology, ethics, ecclesiology, and eschatology of the New Testament writings, as well as to provide an analysis for the documents setting in early Christian history. His treatment of justification in the Pauline letters is particularly striking: "For Paul, righteousness/justification in the strict sense is not a matter of doing but of being. God's act is prior to any human activity; the new being has the character not of a deed but of a gift" (268). The strongest aspect of Schnelle's work might be his thorough discussion of anthropology in the Pauline and Johannine writings.

***Because of Christ: Memoirs of a Lutheran Theologian***. By Carl E. Braaten. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 210 pages.

Approaching his eightieth birthday, Carl Braaten offers a theological autobiography as he narrates his own sojourn from its beginning in the home of missionary parents in Madagascar to his still vigorous retirement years in Sun City West, Arizona. Like the life of the author, *Because of Christ* is energetic and provocative, rooted and yet far ranging. Braaten relives memories of the decades-long controversy between Lutheran orthodoxy, embodied in Herman A. Preus, and pietistic revivalism, represented by George Aus, at Luther Seminary, of which he was a student participant. He tells of his days as a parish pastor in Minneapolis and time spent at Harvard as a student of Paul Tillich. Most revealing perhaps is his recollection of his time as a teacher at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and his early exodus to partner with his friend Robert Jenson in the formation of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology, as well as his ongoing critique of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as a church body adrift in liberal Protestantism. Braaten's theology, like his life, is variegated, echoing confessional, ecumenical, and missionary themes. Agree with him or

not, Braaten is colorful and fascinating. His telling of the story of his life is prophetically edgy and energetic. This is a book well worth reading not only to retrace the path of Carl Braaten but also to catch a glimpse in forces that are still shaping American Lutheranism.

***Preaching the Reformation: The Homiletical Handbook of Urbanus Rhegius.*** Translated by Scott Hendrix. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2003. 120 pages.

❖ Urbanus Rhegius (1489–1541) was a Lutheran pastor first in Augsburg and then superintendent in Lüneburg, where he wrote this handbook on preaching for young pastors so that they might “learn to speak carefully” about various articles of the Christian faith. Rhegius is a model for coherent and precise evangelical speaking.

***A Booklet of Comfort for the Sick & On the Christian Knight.*** By Johann Spangenberg. Translated by Robert Kolb. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007. 149 pages.

❖ Published in the late 1540s by Luther’s friend and coworker, this popular devotional piece portrays the believer as a “Christian knight” struggling against the devil, human desires, and the world. In this work the consolation of the forgiveness of sins in Christ is front and center. Here we see how the Wittenberg theology was lived out in life and death. This is an excellent example of Reformation pastoral care for the sick and the dying.

***On Being a Disciple of the Crucified Nazarene.*** By Ernst Käsemann. Translated by Roy A. Harrisville. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 337 pages.

❖ Ernst Käsemann (1906–1998) was a leading New Testament scholar known for his relentless use of the historical-critical method to lay bare the radical claim of the righteousness of God apart from every attempt to confine it by means of canon or confession. Imprisoned by the Nazis and, in the last decades of his life, a revolutionary voice in German politics and church life, Käsemann saw the essence of discipleship as a resistance to every ideology that would lay hold of human life and offer itself as the ultimate foundation for existence. These essays and sermons along with a “Theological Review” written by Käsemann in his ninetieth year, translated by his student and friend, Roy Harrisville (see Harrisville’s essay, “The Life and Work of Ernst Käsemann (1906–1988),” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 21 [2007]: 294–319) give evidence to theological method employed prophetically in the last three decades of the twentieth century. Full of vigor and provocation, one may appreciate his passion for the preaching of the cross alone even as one recognizes his inability

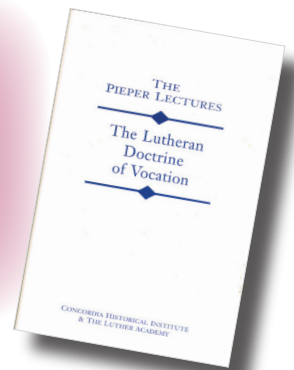
to move beyond the presuppositions of the method which he so staunchly defended.

***Letters and Papers From Prison.*** Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Works, vol. 8, Edited by John W. De Gruchy. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010. 750 pages.

❖ The most recent volume in the projected sixteen-volume set is the greatly expanded and annotated book first published in English translation by Reginald Fuller under the title *Letters and Papers From Prison* in 1953. Several more editions would appear in North America in the ensuing years. The original German version assembled by Bonhoeffer’s close friend Eberhard Bethge in 1951 under the title *Widerstand und Ergebung* did not include some of Bethge’s own correspondence with Bonhoeffer now included in this edition. The material in volume eight ranges from July 1943, after Bonhoeffer was apprehended in Berlin for interrogation, and continues through the end of February 1945, less than two months before his execution. The bulk of material in this volume is letters to family and friends. Other significant pieces include his famous “Wedding Sermon From a Prison Cell,” prayers, and poems. This volume makes for fascinating reading, as it bears testimony to the reflections and piety of one of the twentieth century’s most-celebrated Christians.

JTP+

The  
Pieper  
Lectures



## The Lutheran Doctrine of Vocation

Trade paperback, 97 pages, \$13.95 per volume, order #PL11

❖ Sponsored annually by Concordia Historical Institute and The Luther Academy, and hosted by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, these lectures, established in honor of Dr. Francis Pieper, are dedicated to the study and discussion of historical theology and are intended to address issues currently under discussion in the church and provide an historical context for this discussion.

Published by **The Luther Academy**

# LUTHER ACADEMY BOOKS

## Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics *(all hardback)*

**Baptism** By David P. Scaer (236 pages) • \$23.95

**Eschatology** By John R. Stephenson (176 pages)  
• \$20.95

**The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry,  
and Governance** By Kurt E. Marquart (264 pages)  
• \$23.95

**Christology** By David P. Scaer (113 pages) • \$19.95

**The Lord's Supper** By John R. Stephenson  
(312 pages) • \$23.95

**Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace**  
By David P. Scaer (238 pages) • \$23.95

**All six volumes** • \$110 (savings of \$26.70)

## Congress on the Lutheran Confessions *(all paperback)*

**God and Caesar Revisited** (1994) • \$11.95

**Church Polity and Politics** (1997) • \$15.95

**Confessional Lutheran Ethics** (1998) • \$15.95

**Theology and Life of  
Robert David Preus** (1999) • \$15.95

**A Justification Odyssey** (2001) • \$15.95

**Feminism and the Church** (2002) • \$15.95

**Contemporary Issues in Fellowship:  
Confessional Principles and Applications**  
(2003) • \$15.95

**Divine Multi-Media: The Manifold Means  
of Grace in the Life of the Church**  
(2004) • \$15.95

**Mission Accomplished? Challenges to and  
Opportunities for Lutheran Missions in the  
Twenty-First Century** (2005) • \$15.95

**We Confess, We Condemn: God's Will and  
Work in Lutheran Perspective** (2006) • \$15.95

## The Pieper Lectures *(all paperback and \$13.95)*

**The Office of the Ministry** (1996)

**Church Fellowship** (1997)

**Pietism and Lutheranism** (1998)

**What Does It Mean to Be Lutheran?** (1999)

**Lutheran Catholicity** (2000)

**The American Book of Concord: A Sesqui-  
centennial Celebration** (2001)

**Sanctification, New Life in Christ** (2002)

**Preaching through the Ages** (2003)

**The Bible in the History of the Lutheran Church**  
(2004)

**Call and Ordination in the Lutheran  
Church** (2005)

**The Lutheran Doctrine of Vocation** (2006)

## Other Luther Academy Books

**Preaching to Young Theologians *Sermons*  
of Robert Preus** paperback • \$12.95

**Martin Chemnitz: *Loci Theologici, De Coena  
Domini, De Duabus Naturis in Christo,  
Theologiae Jesuitarum*** hardback • \$74.95

**Church and Ministry Today: Three  
Confessional Lutheran Essays.** "The Doctrine of the  
Call in the Confessions and Lutheran Orthodoxy," by R. Preus.  
"It is Not Given to Women to Teach: A Lex in Search of a Ratio,"  
by W. Weinrich. "Church Growth? As Mission Paradigm:  
A Confessional Lutheran Assessment," by K. Marquart • \$16.95

**The Church and Her Treasure: Lectures on  
Justification and the True Visible Church** (2006)  
by Francis Pieper, Trans. by O. Marc Tangner  
paperback • \$21.95

**Luther's Lectures on Genesis and the Formation  
of Evangelical Identity** (2008) hardback • \$35

---

### TO ORDER

► Outside the U.S. add \$5 per book for shipping & handling

► See page 1 for more ordering information

(605) 887-3145

WWW.LOGIA.ORG



# LOGIA Forum

## SHORT STUDIES AND COMMENTARY

### THE HOUR OF THE SELK

*The following is excerpted from a translation of an article by Jürgen Diestelmann, pastor emeritus of St. Ulrici-Brüdern, Braunschweig, Germany. It first appeared as “Die Stunde der SELK” in Lutherische Beiträge Nr. 4/2009 and was translated by Peter A. Bauernfeind. The full translation of the article may be found at [logia.org](http://logia.org).*

I see Christians who know the Bible, and know exactly what it says, but nevertheless allow themselves to be swept into the maelstrom of the Zeitgeist, which is always the exact opposite of what is in the Bible. What was impossible for two thousand years in the church is now possible. Faith in the triune God, the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the holiness and reliability of his word, and the foundational declaration of faith are frequently placed in question, since they do not appear acceptable in the prevailing Zeitgeist. Often this goes along with an argument that appears biblical. Thus the demand that we preserve creation is all the rage, but God has crowned his work of creation so that he created and blessed mankind as male and female, and he called marriage a holy estate. This, however, is often overlooked, even as the demand for the preservation of creation is being affirmed. In any event, we are experiencing in our time understandings of marriage and sexuality that spread rapidly, which will make it questionable whether the Christian understanding of marriage will be subscribed to at all in a few decades. And this is only an example from today's current opinions, in which the message of the Bible is placed in question. A new paganism arises.

The church lives in such a world today. How does she respond to this? Little congregations become combined with larger congregations. Structural debates occupy committees, associations, and high ecclesiastical bodies. Bureaucracies

expand, and pastoral offices and congregations are sacked. Certainly the ecclesiastical apparatus becomes impersonal and alienated from the people.

This is the great opportunity of the Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche (SELK) in our time. She is bound to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, and that is why with complete justification she confesses in the sense of the Nicene Creed “one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church.” She builds her life and her proclamation upon that foundation, and she is in the position to give a clear witness regarding the confusions of the ecclesiastical and intellectual pluralism of our times. She can give direction and support to all Protestants who suffer under those disowning the reformers, especially in the church that bears the legacy of Martin Luther. She clings to the Bible as the word of God, which leads to eternal salvation. She can give the young (and not only them) a solid path of guidance with Luther's Small Catechism, to lead a life in relationship with the triune God.

### A SERMON ON THE HOLY TRINITY AUGSBURG CONFESSION, ARTICLE I

*This is excerpted from a sermon by Armin Wenz preached on 26 June 2009 for the Commemoration of the Augsburg Confession. It was translated by Peter A. Bauernfeind. The full translation of the sermon may be found at [logia.org](http://logia.org).*

We believe in the triune God. The Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession joins in the belief of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Christianity. Is that not an unacceptable anachronism? How should the modern person understand this? And of what use is this doctrine in our day and age? Is it not a direct impediment to the reputation of the gospel? Is it not enough if we just appreciate the Lord Jesus as a good man whom we love? Must we also worry about his divine, spiritual nature? Most of the groups that are rejected in the second part of the first article of the Augsburg Confes-

---

ARTICLES FOUND IN LOGIA FORUM may be reprinted freely for study and dialogue in congregations and conferences. Please use appropriate bibliographical references. Initialed pieces are written by contributing editors whose names are noted on our masthead.

sion are rejected, even though they had some fondness for the Lord Jesus. That is especially true for Islam, which only appreciates Jesus as a great prophet.

For this reason alone, the confession of the Holy Trinity is not an anachronism, nor is it an unnecessary counterbalance formula that impedes the message of the church. The doctrines addressed in the Lutheran Confessions are still relevant today. Therefore the Augsburg Confession remains a necessary antithesis to the doctrines of human reason, which cannot imagine the Trinity and cannot imagine any more that Christ is true man and true God.

The church speaks this antithesis in her confession, because the criteria of human reason are not fundamental for the church, but the self-introduction of God in the Holy Scriptures is fundamental. When I get to know a person, I do not get ready to meet him, but I perceive him as he introduces himself to me, although I cannot immediately comprehend everything about him. When God introduces himself to us, we do not straighten it out with our reason, but we should rather see him as he introduces himself to us. God has now unequivocally revealed himself to us in the word of Holy Scripture as the one and only God, whom we encounter at the same time as the Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit. As it is with people, it is more so with God: God is as he introduces himself. We should thus address him as he reveals himself to us in his word: as one true God in three distinct Persons.

For the Reformation, taking seriously the self-introduction of God is also of paramount importance because our redemption before God through justification on account of Christ is only possible on the basis of faith in the Trinity. So it is, therefore, the question of salvation. For the justification of the sinner becomes reality in our baptism in which we are baptized in the name of the triune God.

Where it is denied that God comes to us in an entirely different way in Christ and the Spirit, the result is that we always think we can find God with our own abilities. The Scriptures, however, say with great clarity: *The natural man does not understand the Spirit of God*. Through his revelation as the triune God, God therefore liberates us from many false representations of God. At the same time, God gives us an absolute certainty of salvation. God indeed remains unfathomable for us as triune in a great variety of ways while we still live here on earth, and still do not look upon him in perfection. However, he has made known to us his nature. He has revealed to us what is necessary for our salvation, so that we can live in fellowship with him. The Father reliably reveals to us that Jesus Christ is true God and true man. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the Light of God, who leads us home to the Father's house. And the Holy Spirit testifies to this Jesus Christ through the word of the apostles and prophets, that his cross and his resurrection is our salvation and our life. The Spirit is the Comforter, whom Christ sends from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who brings us to Christ, who calls us to the heavenly Father.

Thus the triune God has withheld nothing from us that we need in order to find him. We do not need to wait for new

prophets and new revelations. God himself has appointed in the word of his heralds who preach Christ to us, and in the sacraments, by which he gives us his Spirit. But since God has revealed himself as triune, we believe on him, and we specifically call upon him, as he reveals and has given himself to us. He is a God who is entirely different, in contrast to the reliance on human beings, because he is both almighty and faithful. As one who has totally given himself up to us, he is gracious and merciful and full of love.

Therefore the confession of the triune God, as the fathers of Augsburg reaffirm the fathers of Nicaea, is never an anachronism, but each time it is the truth necessary for salvation, not that we must bear or understand, but that bears us and shapes us. We owe this common confession to our God with the church of all ages because he has redeemed us. We owe this confession with the church of all ages because the sinful world needs this redemption. Amen.

## WHAT IS THE ELFK?

The Evangelish-Lutherische Freikirche (ELFK), or Evangelical Lutheran Free Church, is the smallest Lutheran church body in Germany. Most of its eighteen established congregations are located in Saxony, but there are mission congregations near Berlin and in the southwest. Mission work is also done in the Vorarlberg region of Austria. The ELFK numbers approximately 1,400 members served by fifteen pastors. The ELFK synod convention held in the summer of 2010 in Nerchau, Saxony, elected Pastor Martin Wilde the new ELFK president.

The synod was founded in 1876 by former members of the German Lutheran State Church who had protested against unionism and liberalism in their church. In the aftermath, the ELFK remained independent from any Lutheran state church due to the rise of rationalism and "higher criticism" of the Scriptures. The ELFK is one of the charter members of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC), which was founded as a worldwide union of confessional Lutheran church bodies in 1993 at Oberwesel, Germany. The synod had been in fellowship with SELK (Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church), but after long debates about unionistic and liberalistic tendencies perceived in the SELK, the ELFK broke fellowship with its former sister church in 1989.

For a long time the ministerial students of the ELFK studied at the seminary of the SELK in Oberursel, West Germany. But in the 1950s restrictions imposed by the Communistic government of East Germany forced the ELFK to start its own seminary in Leipzig, Saxony. From today's perspective this turned out to be a blessing from the Lord, since the small church body was able to train its own confessional Lutheran pastors despite a Communistic and atheistic environment.

The ELFK operates a Lutheran elementary school and a confessional Lutheran book store called Concordia-Buchhandlung (Concordia Publishing House). Both are located in Zwickau, Saxony.

*Michael Müller  
Hartenstein, Germany*

## LOVE THE LANGUAGES AS YOU LOVE THE GOSPEL!

Back in the days when Latin and German were prerequisites for theological study at Lutheran seminaries in North America, many young theologians traveled to Germany to work toward higher degrees. Lutheran theology in North America was and still is nourished by the theological insights they gained from their study of the primary sources of Lutheranism under the guidance of influential German theologians such as Werner Elert, Paul Althaus, Helmut Thielicke, and many others. Today the primary texts of the Reformation that drew Americans to study in Germany are increasingly available online at <http://www.vd16.de> and other similar websites, so that people from all over the world can access the stacks of the most prestigious libraries in Germany. Unfortunately, however, our students' ability to read and analyze these sources has dropped to an all-time low.

The decline is due, in part, to a shift in theological education at Lutheran seminaries. We now assume that requiring students to learn the languages of our Lutheran Confessions is too demanding and our seminaries have whittled down the prerequisites of theological education to Greek alone, and in some cases not even that. The bulk of theological education now consists of New Testament exegesis (which is praiseworthy and necessary), since that is the only subject which students are equipped to analyze in depth. But because students lack the Latin and German, they cannot learn how distinctively *Lutheran* exegesis is done, since the resources for such a study are so limited. For example, how many of us know that Lutherans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries wrote instructive commentaries and preached powerful sermons on the book of James? Without that knowledge and the ability to read what Lutherans have written, we are forced to reinvent the wheel, and it does not roll as well. Being students of the Scriptures requires us also to remain students of its interpretation. To assume that our Greek and modern hermeneutics are enough to do sound theology is to commit the same mistake as Zwingli at the Marburg Colloquy. He esteemed himself and his twelve years of Greek too highly and his arrogance led him into error.

And so I challenge Lutherans in North America to encourage their young theologians to go beyond the curriculum and requirements of their seminaries to learn German and Latin,

perhaps beginning at a young age. If we do not do this, Lutheranism in America will continue to alienate itself from its own heritage. More than a challenge, this article is also an invitation to young theologians who are willing to learn German, Latin, and more theology to do so *in Germany*.

American Lutherans who are blessed with the opportunity to study and do research in Germany will find out for themselves that German Lutheran scholarship surpasses ours in many ways, simply because the Germans are at home in the literature, language, and landmarks of the Reformation. Since Americans often have to struggle to acquaint themselves with things that come quite naturally to Germans, we can benefit a great deal by learning from them. They have the language from their mothers and prerequisite of Latin at their universities, the books from their libraries, the cobbled-stone streets and cathedrals, Luther, Melancthon, Gerhard, and Bach, not to mention cheap education combined with enough scholarly pride to be familiar with what these great minds wrote and composed. Their acquaintance with the sources puts them at a distinct advantage in their theological knowledge. Before I began my studies in Germany, the church historian and Flacius scholar, Oliver Olson, told me: "The Germans know everything!"

He was right, of course: Germans do know everything, but that does not mean they have everything right. With all the resources and knowledge that the Germans possess, their greatest danger continues to be that of complacency, of contentment with knowledge for the sake of knowledge, and of keeping their scholarly distance from the task of applying what they know to the church today. For that, the Germans have suffered a great loss in their churches. Dr. Olson addressed this tendency as he shared with me the task of a church historian: "We study church history," he said, "so that we are prepared to remind people in the church of what they have forgotten and to point them to what they desperately need to remember. Our job is to tap people on the shoulder."

Failure to apply history and what we know from the reformers to our church has not been a distinctive problem of American Lutherans. Our problem is that we do not have the ability to read all that the reformers wrote. We are therefore in danger of becoming satisfied with the spirit of the Reformation without the flesh and bone of its language and original texts. But if we take hold of these texts of our Lutheran heritage, either online or, better, with our German brothers and sisters, we surround ourselves with an even greater cloud of witnesses, so that together we do not forget what we desperately need to remember.

*Jason D. Lane  
Hamburg, Germany*

## DARE TO BE LUTHERAN?

When I went with my daughter to her new student enrollment at the university, part of the agenda for the day was the opportunity to visit with representatives from the various clubs, organizations, and so forth, associated with the university. We made our way through displays for ROTC, the Society for Physics Students, the Bowling Team, until the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (LCMS) campus pastor met us. After introductions, the pastor told my daughter that she ought to “stop on by” sometime.

We walked past numerous other booths, including a highly deceptive table for the gay-lesbian-transgender-and so forth organization, until we stopped near the booth for the Roman Catholic center on campus. While I did not visit with the priest (he was busy visiting with three other people), I made some observations.

The first thing that caught my eye was their display table. From the perspective of eye appeal, it was well done. You could tell that they had put time and effort into presenting themselves in a way that showed they had something they wanted to share with you. The major headings on their display board trumpeted the mass, the liturgy, catechesis, and the opportunity for private confession and absolution. You could say that they “dared to be Roman Catholic.”

In hindsight, the LCMS campus booth was indistinguishable from the nondenominational displays. The LCMS pastor was dressed like the representatives from the Methodist Church, Episcopal Church, and the Campus Recreation Department. In contrast, you knew who the Roman Catholic priest was, even from across the room.

The point of my observation is not a dress code, or a marketing approach, but that we are afraid to be Lutheran. I am not suggesting that we simply run around yelling, “We are Lutheran,” but rather to trumpet the treasures of the divine service (the mass), the liturgy, catechesis, and private confession and absolution as properly taught by the Lutheran Confessions.

This is what makes us unique, what makes us stand out in a crowd. And yet, it is not for attention or standing among men that we boldly confess these truths, but for the sake of young college students, the elderly in nursing homes, and for the family around the corner.

They need the gospel — and not just any generic gospel — but the gospel who has come down from heaven and was made flesh for our salvation; the gospel who abides with us, catechizing us in the way that leads to life everlasting; the gospel who feeds us with his own body and blood, who hears our sins and says “I forgive you.” They need Jesus, who comes not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Even as we humbly receive his service, dare we preach such a Jesus to the world? And the answer is YES!

*Scott T. Porath,  
Eagle, Nebraska*

## STANDING ON SCRIPTURE! PART ONE

*An address given to The American Association of Lutheran Churches (TAALC) Convention at Fort Wayne, Indiana, on 23 June 2010 by Mark Mattes.*

In Jeremiah we read of one of the last kings of Judah, Jehoiakim, and his response to the word of God. After Jeremiah dictated to his scribe Baruch the words of prophecy given to him by God, Jeremiah instructed him to read this document in the temple. Jeremiah himself was restricted and forbidden to enter the temple. When the king’s officials heard these words, Baruch’s document was taken and he and Jeremiah were told to hide. The official Jehudi was told to bring the book before the king and read it to him. “It was the ninth month and the king was sitting in the winter apartment, with a fire burning in the firepot in front of him. Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe’s knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire. The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes. . . . Even though Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them. Instead, the king commanded Jehmeel, a son of the king, Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet. But the LORD had hidden them” (Jer 36:22–26).

### WHITTLING THE WORD IN THE ELCA

This is one response to God’s word: whittle it down, reject it, even burn it. At the 2009 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) churchwide assembly major policy recommendations to allow for the blessing of same-sex unions, and to affirm the rostering of pastors in same-sex, partnered relationships. Some parties in the ELCA welcome these changes; indeed, they believe that they are long overdue. Others who have misgivings about these changes believe that they are relatively harmless and will not affect their own congregations. Of course, there are others (including myself) who find these changes to be an affront to the Scriptures and reveal the ELCA to be heretical. In contrast, Richard Johnson, editor of *Forum Letter*, believes that to accuse the ELCA of heresy on account of this change is “a bit over the top.” He goes on to say: “Heresy generally involves a specific and overt repudiation of some key doctrine of the Christian faith. What the ELCA has done is serious error, to be sure, but I don’t think it rises to the status of heresy.”<sup>1</sup>

Can we agree with Richard Johnson? Not if we want to stand on the word. The Sixth Commandment says, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod 20:14). Scripture sets firm, life-affirming boundaries to our behaviors. The Sixth Command-

1. *Forum Letter*, November 2009.

ment expresses in words a law that is written into creation itself: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). God’s requirements for marriage between a man and a woman are clear. They are built into the order of creation itself and are not to be revised!

Prior to its vote on same-sex relations, the ELCA church-wide assembly passed by one vote (out of over a thousand total votes cast) a Social Statement on Sexuality that admitted there was no consensus on the moral evaluation of homosexual conduct, and offered no compelling biblical or theological reason to support the policies it later adopted. As Robert Benne, a strong voice in opposition to changes in the ELCA, notes, “The Statement was firm and bold on issues that everyone agreed upon—the moral condemnation of promiscuity, pornography, sexual exploitation, etc.—but indecisive and vague about contested issues—co-habitation, premarital sex, the importance of the nuclear family, and, of course, homosexual conduct.” Benne remarks that what the church-wide assembly did was to “overturn the moral consensus of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church held throughout the ages and by 99 percent of the world’s Christians.”<sup>2</sup>

While this change of policy comes as a surprise to some laity, one wonders how that could be the case. If one has had any contact with the ELCA over the last decade, this vote is not all that surprising. This single issue has been pushed in synod assemblies year after year. No doubt longtime members of TAALC who refused to be a part of the ELCA merger over twenty years ago, due to their firm stance on the Bible as the word of God and not just as a vessel for the word of God, might respond, “I told you so!” And, those of us who chose to stay in the ELCA definitely feel the sting of this criticism. Even though this specific agenda was pushed, no orthodox believer has the wherewithal to believe the church could deviate so far from scriptural and apostolic practice . . . even if this agenda was pushed as long as it was. Increasingly the ELCA has become a church of King Jehoiakims, whittling at the word of God and throwing it into the fire.

### A DIFFERENT GOSPEL

Already, prior to the merger, many in TAALC saw the church become more and more taken over by a “social gospel.” Indeed, it is reported that one of the voting members at the 2009 churchwide assembly publically claimed that “there is nothing but the Social Gospel.” What was already in place in TAALC and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) has only increased rapidly in the ELCA, such that virtually every institution of higher education, especially the seminaries, as well as the conference of bishops and the publishing house, Augsburg Fortress, is guided by this “social gospel.” What has become of the real gospel: that we are forgiven, loved,

and reborn for Jesus’ sake, because he bore our sin and its punishment on the cross, and that we have new life in his resurrection? Shockingly, ELCA leaders see this message as less than the gospel. In their estimation, this view addresses merely a “private matter”—our need for forgiveness and new life—and falls short of the political implications of the “real” gospel. Instead of forgiveness, they think that the gospel focuses on the quest for a just society. And, since in their judgment those engaged in same-sex partnering are oppressed minorities, they need justice rendered to them instead of the accusation of sin.

The “gospel” in the ELCA has been overtaken by specific ethical agendas: militant feminism, multiculturalism, antiracism, antiheterosexism, anti-imperialism, and ecologism.<sup>3</sup> The mission of the ELCA sounds more like the ideals of the French Enlightenment, “liberty, equality, fraternity,” rather than the true gospel. Now, had God never given the gospel it is hard to believe than anyone would ever have come up with specific ideals such as liberty, equality, and fraternity. The pagan world did not acknowledge these three ideals. Instead, it accepted slavery, inequality, and violence. The French Revolution took genuine ideals of Christian truth—in Christ we are truly free (from sin, death, the devil, and the accusations of the law), have equal status before God (as created in God’s image and as equally sinful before the cross), and have true brotherhood (fellowship) in Christ—and perverted them by reinterpreting them through the lens of humanism. Like the ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras, the French Enlightenment affirmed that “man is the measure of all things.” But any Christian knows that this is foolishness! We are not our own creators. We are created. The source of our life is in God and we are only true to reality when we acknowledge that our lives are gifts and that God is our creator.

In the ELCA, the true gospel is eclipsed. Perhaps the key test in my mind is this: whatever became of hell? If there is one teaching the majority of ELCA revisionists do not believe in, it is that sinners are destined to eternal torment; indeed they share in this torment even in this life. For an orthodox believer, Jesus saves us from hell. Jesus saves us from God’s wrath against sin. For the majority of leaders in the ELCA, Jesus saves us from “injustice,” with accusation directed especially at us, the perpetrators of injustice. And the implication of that belief is that you ought to be as free as possible, provided you do no harm to anyone else. Hence we see the move towards license in sexual ethics.

How can such overturning of biblical teaching happen? We need to keep in mind that the ELCA is run by a quota system that skews every committee, council, task force, synod assembly, and national assembly toward the revisionist side.<sup>4</sup> All these venues must be composed of 60 percent laity, 50 percent women, 10 percent people of color or whose

2. Quotations from Benne are taken from “How Did We Come to This?” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 73 (2009): 364–67. I follow Benne’s language quite closely.

3. The list is taken from Robert Benne’s article.

4. Again, I’m following Benne’s language quite closely.

language is other than English. Incidentally, bishops voted 44–14 to require a two-thirds majority for the enactment of the Sexuality Task Force’s policy recommendations, but were ignored by both the Church Council and the Assembly. Many of these bishops knew that it would be pastors and congregations who would have to face the aftermath of such radical changes. While orthodox pastors and laity appeal to the plain sense of Scripture, the revisionists simply “contextualize” or “relativize” these texts. Repeatedly I have heard professors of Bible at ELCA seminaries say that Paul believed that homosexual practices were sinful, but to be true to Paul today we don’t have to be. After all, Paul was for freedom, and so we should be too!

### THE FATE OF THE APOSTATE CHURCH

What becomes of churches that adopt the “social gospel” and the revisionist agenda? We can examine the membership statistics of churches like The Episcopal Church USA, the United Church of Christ, and the Presbyterian Church USA.<sup>5</sup> The Episcopal Church has shrunk 10 percent in membership and 14 percent in average Sunday attendance since the consecration of Bishop Gene Robinson in 2003. At least 10 dioceses have taken clear action in protest against their national church. Six remain in the Episcopal Church, but four dioceses have now departed, forming the new Anglican Church in North America with seven hundred parishes and 100,000 members. The United Church of Christ declined 14 percent during the 1990s and has shrunk an astounding 19 percent in the first eight years of the current decade. They have barely 1.1 million members. It is likely the UCC will be out of existence in about three decades. While local presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church USA have resisted the General Assembly’s proposals to embrace revisionist sexual ethics and rename the Holy Trinity, the PCUSA has suffered significant losses over the last several decades.

The ELCA has thrown in its lot with such liberal, “mainline” denominations. And the consequences are increasingly visible. Visiting with the bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod of the ELCA about two years ago I was told that he could foresee about thirty to forty congregations closing in his synod within the next decade. All this was said without the good bishop even batting an eyelash. “Reconciling in Christ” congregations in the ELCA — those congregations that openly welcome practicing gay and lesbian persons — since 2001 have shrunk by 11 percent, twice as fast as the ELCA as a whole. Indeed, under the current Presiding Bishop, Mark Hanson, the ELCA has dropped from 5.1 million members to 4.7 million members. This alone should call for an assessment. In higher education, we are expected to assess the effectiveness of our teaching on almost a semester-by-semester basis. At the forefront of our work are the questions: Where are we succeeding, where are

we failing, what can we do to improve? Business likewise needs such self-assessment. However, ELCA leadership continues its same liberal trajectory with nary a question raised. Since the ELCA was formed over twenty years ago, the number of annual new mission starts has declined by 50 percent and the number of missionaries in the field has declined by more than 60 percent. Again the kind of mantra we hear was said by an ELCA pastor on the floor of the Minneapolis churchwide assembly (quoting a former bishop): “Jesus would be passing out condoms.” One wonders when and if the insanity will end. (*to be continued . . .*)

Mark Mattes  
Des Moines, IA

## DOLLARS AND SEATS, REVEREND!

*In a recent New York Times article, G. Jeffrey MacDonald broaches the topic of clergy burnout. The problem, he asserts, is not unique to any particular denomination, but is widespread in the Christian church.<sup>1</sup>*

The pastoral vocation is to help people grow spiritually, resist their lowest impulses, and adopt higher, more compassionate ways. But churchgoers increasingly want pastors to soothe and entertain them. It is apparent in the theater-style seating and giant projection screens in churches, and in mission trips that involve more sightseeing than listening to the local people. As a result, pastors are constantly forced to choose, as they work through congregants’ daily wish lists in their e-mail and voice mail, between paths of personal integrity and those that portend greater job security. As religion becomes a consumer experience, the clergy become more unhappy and unhealthy. The trend toward consumer-driven religion has been gaining momentum for half a century.

There is no coincidence in this time line. As the charismatic movement has evolved into the church growth movement, which has further morphed into the Transforming Churches Network (TCN)<sup>2</sup> and Natural Church Development,<sup>3</sup> a redefinition has also occurred in the pastor’s job description. You will not hear it in the official ordination vows or in the installation service. But you just may at the next church council meeting, voters’ assembly, circuit gathering, or district conference. To put it quite simply the pastor’s measure of success these days is now “dollars and seats.”

MacDonald points to research that shows many pastors are overworked and need more vacations and time off. However, that is only a symptom of a much deeper problem.

5. For information in this section I’m dependent on Ryan Schwarz’s address to the Lutheran Core Convention, “Reconfiguration,” September 2009.

1. “Congregations Gone Wild,” 7 August 2010.  
2. <http://portal.tcnbackup.com/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx>  
3. <http://ncd-international.org/public/>

Through a combination of business principles, American revivalist theology à la Charles G. Finney, and a deadly smothering of the gospel with the law, the basic premise of the TCN is this: that a nongrowing congregation is at best unhealthy and at worst dead. If your numbers are down (worship attendance numbers or contribution numbers), then quick action is needed. TCN proponents have often told me that “it is much easier to heal the sick than to raise the dead.” Don’t tell that one to Jesus! After all, that is his cup of tea!

The primary expectation and revised job description for the pastor is simple: produce! “It’s up to you pastor! Pack them in! Get them rolling in the aisles! Everything depends on you pastor! Cast a vision that we want to follow! Get with it man! Make sure we exceed our budget! Lead our congregation to a roaring success through numerical growth!” To be fair, these expectations have always been among us. A theology of glory comes naturally to all of us. But now, through TCN and its related programs, a theology of glory has become institutionalized and codified. The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (LCMS) in convention has approved of “revitalization,” and TCN is the vehicle for its implementation. This action of the institution is the LCMS equivalent of “Thus says the Lord!”

How does this institutionalized revitalization work? In a word: accountability. That is to say, mathematical growth in dollars and seats eclipses all other factors and considerations. People, especially the pastor, must be held accountable to the TCN vision. Strategies must be designed to reach and achieve benchmarks successfully. Budgets and financial donations need to fill the coffers because these indicate a healthy church. With regard to attendance: if your congregation does not have an increase of at least 5 percent in worship attendance, something is wrong and the pastor will be accountable. Other accountability measuring sticks are small groups, community involvement, and adult baptisms (incredibly, infant baptisms do not seem to count on the accountability scorecard). Are you worried yet? No need! After all, a Transformation Coach<sup>4</sup> will train your congregational leaders on how to hold the pastor accountable. Here are some of the “Revitalization Learnings”:

- Holding staff accountable enables them to seek and hold pastors and congregations accountable.
- Underachieving staff receive no raise or are let go.
- Pastors need to be held accountable for results.
- Ineffective pastors are asked to move on.<sup>5</sup>

The district and synod will also hold you accountable. Leadership books, seminars, and affinity groups will be supplied. Someone from “headquarters” will attend your church meetings to make sure the proper agenda is followed.

Be careful not to ask too many theological questions. I have heard many such “helpers” respond to “theology” questions with poetically memorized bylaws, complete with chapter and verse. If you press, with more “theology” from, say, the Bible, the Augsburg Confession, or the Small Catechism, you will be labeled as some unloving, moronic, Neanderthal who is totally unconcerned with the growth of the kingdom and deserves to be removed from the clergy roster immediately! If you are lucky, you might just hear the cop-out answer: “I’m not a theologian!” (To which I simply say, “Shame on you!”)

Is there any wonder why pastors burn out? Is there any wonder why pastors are having increased health, family, and marital problems? Is there any wonder why more and more pastors are having moral lapses? Are we surprised that the counselors are doing a booming business and that those clergy types wear out their couches? The pressure to produce is more than any person can bear.

How different this is from our Lord’s desire for his called and ordained servants of the word! There is freedom, true freedom, when human market strategies and temporary cleverness give way to Christ and his word (John 8:31–32). We have been given to trust the Lord with his Spirit-filled word, who creates faith when and where it pleases him. Christ crucified and risen from the dead for the forgiveness of sins is the center of our message and ministry (1 Cor 2:2). Pastors are charged to preach the word, in and out of season, regardless of what itching ears and accountability partners say (2 Tim 4:1–5). Pastors are stewards of the mysteries of God and are called first and foremost to be faithful to him (1 Cor 4:1–2). The benchmarks by which the pasture is to be measured (if I dare even use that term) are not dollars and seats but the marks of the church: the word of God preached and taught in truth and purity, and the holy sacraments administered according to the command and promise of Christ (compare the Lord’s Prayer, First Petition, and its meaning in the Small Catechism).

Growth? We leave that to the Lord who says: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). The trend toward consumer-driven religion has indeed been gaining momentum for half a century. But the word of the Lord stands forever (Isa 40:8; 1 Pet 1:25). And he sows it quite carelessly and scandalously according to our institutional standards. But he scatters the seed of the gospel nonetheless and we will leave the results up to him. As the hymn “Preach You the Word” (LSB #586) puts it so nicely:

Preach you the Word and plant it home  
To men who like or like it not,  
The Word that shall endure and stand  
When flow’rs and men shall be forgot.

We know how hard, O Lord, the task  
Your servant bade us undertake:  
To preach Your Word and never ask  
What prideful profit it may make.

4. <http://portal.tcnbackup.com/WhatisTCN/Coaching/tabid/55/Default.aspx>.

5. [http://www.powershow.com/view/14a2f1-YTJmZ/Revitalization\\_Learnings](http://www.powershow.com/view/14a2f1-YTJmZ/Revitalization_Learnings).

The sower sows; his reckless love  
Scatters abroad the goodly seed,  
Intent alone that all may have  
The wholesome loaves that all men need.

Though some be snatched and some be scorched  
And some be choked and matted flat,  
The sower sows; his heart cries out,  
“Oh, what of that, and what of that?”

Of all his scattered plenteousness  
One-fourth waves ripe on hill and flat,  
And beats a harvest hundredfold:  
“Ah, what of that, Lord, what of that?”

Preach you the Word and plant it home  
And never faint; the Harvest Lord  
Who gave the sower seed to sow  
Will watch and tend His planted Word.

*Clint K. Poppe  
Lincoln, Nebraska*

## OUR SAVIOR IN A MANGER LAY

*Kathryn Ann Hill is the author of Rich in Grace: The Bible of the Poor for Twenty-First-Century Christians: Meditations in Verse on the Triptychs of Biblia Pauperum, published in December 2007 by the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau. Lutheran Legacy, Inc., will publish her new book of poems on the parables of our Lord, To You It Has Been Given.*

Our Savior in a manger lay  
To signify the holy food  
That brings us pardon, peace, and life:  
His body and his precious blood;

And wrapped in swaddling clothes was he  
To bring to mind the burial clothes  
That later he would set aside—  
For though he died, our Christ arose.

You feed us when we hunger, Lord,  
And by your rising from the grave  
You guarantee that all will live  
Who trust your will to love and save.

Our living bread you are, O Christ;  
The gates of heaven you unbar;  
We bless your name for you became  
The God who meets us where we are.

*Hymn text ©2010 Kathryn Ann Hill  
Sung to the tune PUER NOBIS (On Jordan's Bank)*

## TEACH ME TO WITHER WITH JOY

*Fredrik Sidenvall, “I korthet: Lär mig du skog att vissna glad,”  
Kyrka och Folk 43 (2003): 3.*

*Adapted translation by Eric R. Andræ, campus pastor,  
First Trinity Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*

Spring is here, and soon summer. Life, new life is all around us. But, before we know it, it will be fall again. Then the leaves of the majestic horse-chestnut tree—the one you see in so many parks—then its yellowing leaves illustrate the history of losers, the defeated.

During the summer the leaves sat up high, warming themselves toward the sky's sun. But in the fall, at first a few of them start to turn yellow. In a mixture of awe and disdain, the surrounding leaves wonder what is the matter! One windy afternoon they see how the yellowing leaf's stem loosens and heavily it falls toward the ground and disappears from sight. For the rest of the leaves, life continues. But it will not be many days until many more of the leaves have the divergent yellow color, and after the first frost many will fall heavily down into the unknown. The crowd of losers grows, the number of the defeated increases.

Among those who retain their position, the fear spreads: “What happens if I also fall? What awaits me? What will become of me?” The rumor spreads that the fallen leaves just contribute to a blackened mud. A few weeks pass. More frost, and new winds shake the tree's branches and suddenly all the leaves come tumbling down. Remaining as victor is the tree-trunk and branches, the hard, steadfast structure. But the leaves are all fallen losers, defeated.

This is the lesson of autumn. But the one who remembers well knows that winter follows fall, and, after winter, then spring again. Then, out of the mounds of soil made up of these fallen losers, out of that blackened mud, out of this soil, a new life can begin to grow and the old tree can receive nourishment.

In the history of this world's losers there is also the recollection of great rain forests, where plants and animals quickly go the way of all flesh during some natural catastrophe. Thousands of years later, all these losers have become the black gold which transforms its discoverer into a winner.

In Swedish there's an expression that says that you can die of winning too much. God's history in the kingdom of nature and of grace teaches us that we can *lose* ourselves unto *life*. Let us then not be tempted to scorn those who today look like the losers. Let us hope in God even if *we* are despised, forsaken, and fall. Let us not despair if all that we wish to build only seems to amount to a lump of mud. God can out of that mess allow life to come forth and grow.

“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,  
And do not return there,  
But water the earth,  
And make it bring forth and bud,



That it may give seed to the sower  
 And bread to the eater,  
 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;  
 It shall not return to Me void,  
 But it shall accomplish what I please,  
 And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”  
 (Isa 55:10–11)

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](mailto: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.

We know what you're thinking:

- Too *HIP*
- Too **CUTTING EDGE**
- Trying to appeal to

**YOUNG PEOPLE**



**BLOGIA**

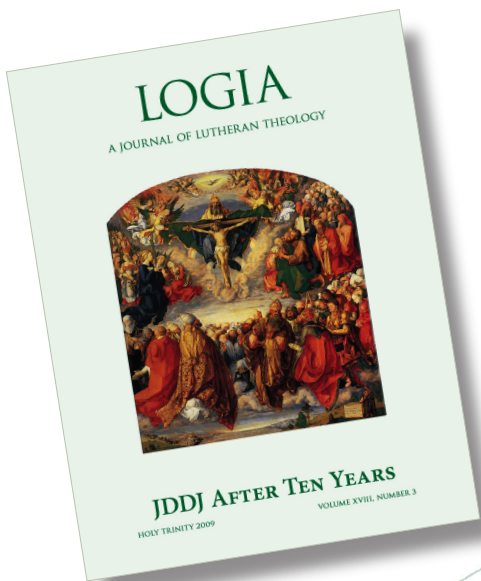


Don't worry –  
 We made it look  
 old and outdated

An opportunity for readers to interact with authors and other readers

**BLOGIA** *def.* LOGIA's new blog. Features Lutheran poetry, sermons, treatises, conference announcements, scholarly pieces and more . . . Comes in two kinds:

- Web Forum features shorter, thought-provoking articles similar to our LOGIA Forum in print, but on the web
- Web Extras has exclusive, full-length articles that you won't find in the printed journal or anywhere else (that we know of!)



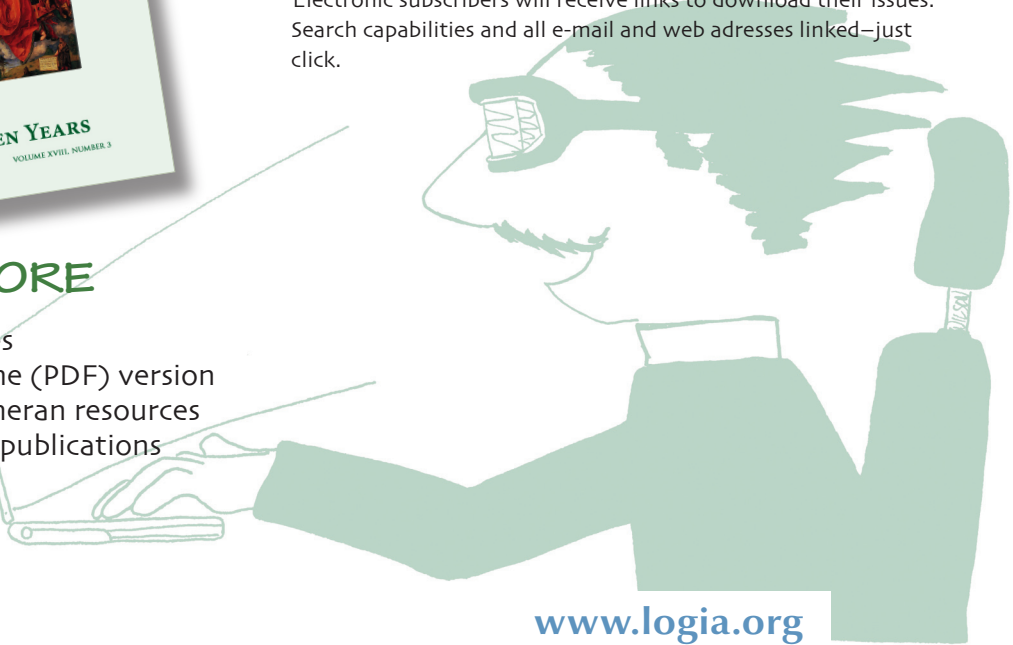
Now you can **SUBSCRIBE** 3 ways

- ⚡ **Print** subscription mailed to you
- ⚡ **Electronic** subscription you can download\*
- ⚡ **Both** print and electronic at a reduced price\*

\* Electronic subscribers will receive links to download their issues. Search capabilities and all e-mail and web addresses linked—just click.

## WEB STORE

- 🌐 search capabilities
- 🌐 subscribe to online (PDF) version
- 🌐 confessional Lutheran resources
- 🌐 Luther Academy publications
- 🌐 request a catalog
- 🌐 free downloads



[www.logia.org](http://www.logia.org)

# SUBSCRIPTIONS

## LOGIA

A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

Title (Rev., Mr., Mrs., Miss) \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email address (for online PDF subscript.) \_\_\_\_\_

USA:  1 year \$30     2 years \$56

Seminarians 1 year \$25

Online:  1 year PDF \$20     ADD 1 year PDF to any subscription for \$10

Canada & Mexico:  1 year \$37     2 years \$70

International:  1 yr: \$55     2 yrs: \$102

Check appropriate boxes:  Payment enclosed (U.S. funds only)     Visa    OR     Mastercard

CC # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. date \_\_\_\_\_

### Upcoming Logia Themes

WALTHER BICENTENNIAL  
Eastertide 2011 (xx:2)

LUTHERAN ANTHROPOLOGY  
Holy Trinity 2011 (xx:3)

LUTHER & AUGUSTINE  
Reformation 2011 (xx:4)

LUTHERANISM IN SCANDINAVIA  
Epiphany 2012 (xxi:1)

LOGIA AFTER TWENTY YEARS  
Eastertide 2012 (xxi:2)

*Don't miss any of these issues:  
Subscribe or renew your subscription now.*

Photocopy and fill out this form.  
See "How to Contact Us" on page 1.

LOGIA: A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

EPIPHANY 2011

VOLUME XX, NUMBER 1