

# LOGIA

A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

## Evangelii

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# HERMENEUTICS

εἰ 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 is committed to providing an independent theological forum normed by the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. At the heart of our journal we want our readers to find a love for the sacred Scriptures as the very Word of God, not merely as rule and norm, but especially as Spirit, truth, and life which reveals Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, we confess the church, without apology and without rancor, only with a sincere and fervent love for the precious Bride of Christ, the holy Christian church, "the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God," as Martin Luther says in the Large Catechism (LC II, 42). We are animated by the conviction that the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession represents the true expression of the church which we confess as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

THE COVER ART features the leaf containing the Easter Gospel (Luke 24:1–20) from the *Biblia Latina cum postillis Nicolai de Lyra* printed in Nuremberg by Anton Koberger on December 3, 1487.

Nicholas de Lyra (c. 1270–1340) was a Franciscan and the best equipped Biblical scholar of the Middle Ages. Luther praised Lyra's work.

Anton Koberger was the greatest printer in the most important center of printing in fifteenth-century Germany.

This copy was made from the original incunabulum given by Paul L. Kluender. The volume is housed in the Rare Book Collection of Concordia Seminary Library in Saint Louis. Used by permission.

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# LOGIA

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# CORRESPONDENCE



Dear Editors,

■ Having “read, marked, learned and inwardly digested” the most recent issue of *LOGIA* (Epiphany/January 1995) I congratulate you on yet another excellent issue.

With regret, I would have to concur with Dr. John Stephenson when he writes in his article “Reflections on the Appropriate Vessels for Consecrating and Distributing the Precious Blood of Christ” that “circumstances have rendered individual cups a practical adiaphoron in the life of North American Lutheranism” (p. 11).

Dr. Stephenson’s article is a welcome contribution to the body of knowledge that is slowly but surely accumulating, and, we hope, directing us toward a more reverent and beneficial use of the Sacrament.

By way of observation, it is unfortunate that the discussion initiated some years ago concerning the consecration in a predecessor journal of *LOGIA* was never resolved, but enough time has passed for the church to be able to

receive the scholarship offered by Dr. Stephenson, Dr. Bjarne Teigen, and others with appreciation. It is always beneficial to receive a perspective that challenges us to examine what may on our part be somewhat parochial understandings.

Every blessing on *LOGIA*’s continuing efforts.

*Paul T. McCain*  
*St. Louis, Missouri*

## LOGIA CORRESPONDENCE AND COLLOQUIUM FRATRUM

*We encourage our readers to respond to the material they find in LOGIA—whether it be in the articles, book reviews, or letters of other readers. While we cannot print everything that comes across our desks, we hope that our COLLOQUIUM FRATRUM section will allow for longer response/counter-response exchanges, whereas our CORRESPONDENCE section is a place for shorter “Letters to the Editors.”*

*If you wish to respond to something in an issue of LOGIA, please do so soon after you receive an issue. Since LOGIA is a quarterly periodical, we are often meeting deadlines for the subsequent issue before you receive your current issue. Getting your responses in early will help keep them timely. Send your CORRESPONDENCE contributions to LOGIA Correspondence, 1004 Plum St., Mankato, MN 56001, or your COLLOQUIUM FRATRUM contributions to LOGIA Editorial Department, 1004 Plum St., Mankato, MN 56001.*

# Biblical Hermeneutics and Modern Linguistics

MARK E. SELL



Does modern linguistics provide any help in the task of the biblical exegete? Since linguistic studies are deeply imbedded in the present-day study of hermeneutics, this question deserves an answer. In seeking to answer it, this essay begins with a survey of the history of hermeneutics, divided into two major periods of development: from antiquity to the middle of the eighteenth century, and from the work of Schleiermacher to the present.<sup>1</sup>

## THE FIRST PERIOD

### *Antiquity to the Mid-Eighteenth Century*

In the first period of hermeneutical study, specifically, in the areas of jurisprudence and theology, the focus was the study of the text. (This will be referred to in the remainder of this study as “traditional hermeneutics.”) In both biblical and legal studies, traditional hermeneutical principles always centered on the text itself and what the author of the text meant. The hermeneutician broke the text down into syllables, words, phrases, and paragraphs in order to determine their meaning. The goal was to decipher properly the words of the theological text, will, or written law.

This traditional approach is based upon a view of language that traces its beginnings to a Platonic and Aristotelian debate, presented in the *Cratylus*. This early discussion concerning the nature of language hinged largely on the question: To what degree should language be regarded as a “natural” as opposed to a “conventional” product of mankind?<sup>2</sup> This controversy became important not simply because of the questions that it raised, but because, during the course of the debate, the “patterns of Greek grammar were first worked out and codified, subsequently to be taken over and applied to Latin by the Latin grammarians, and thence to form the basis of traditional grammatical theory and language teaching throughout Europe.”<sup>3</sup> During this period, a second discipline developed from the study of language, namely, literary criticism and the exposition of earlier, recognized classical authors. With the spread of Greek over wide areas of the Near and Middle East, the differences between the dialects of Greek (Classical, Attic, colloquial, and so forth) gave rise to a critical study of the different grammatical forms being used. The purpose behind such study was to preserve the “correct” Greek language.<sup>4</sup>

One of the crowning glories of the traditional hermeneutical period was the Reformation era during the sixteenth century. Robert M. Grant writes: “Protestant interpretation of the Bible owes its life to the spirit of the Reformation.”<sup>5</sup> At the heart of the sixteenth century’s interpretational upheaval was Luther’s biblical interpretation. F. W. Farrar notes concerning this era:

The genius of Erasmus and the learning of Melanchthon would have produced but small results without the titanic force of Luther, the sovereign good sense of Zwingli, the remorseless logic of Calvin—and of these three the greatest was Martin Luther.<sup>6</sup>

Martin Luther’s insistence upon the sole authority of Scripture for the Christian provided the church with the freedom to read the Holy Scriptures apart from the chains and shackles of the papacy. Luther, however, not only gave the people the open Bible; he also “taught them and all the world how best it might be interpreted.”<sup>7</sup> The importance of this period cannot be overemphasized.

## THE SECOND PERIOD

### *Mid-Eighteenth Century to the Present*

The second period of hermeneutical study broadens the focal point of hermeneutical research. The focal point of hermeneutics in this period includes the text, the person behind the text (the author), and the interpreter. This second period will be referred to in the remainder of this study as “modern hermeneutics.”

### *From Text to Text and Author*

The formal metamorphosis of hermeneutics can be traced to the “father of hermeneutics,” Friedrich Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher’s work in hermeneutics paved the way for a very different approach to the text.<sup>8</sup> His work on Greek and biblical texts caused him “to realize that the tools of the philologist succeeded in illuminating only the surface or ‘vocabulary’ levels of the text—the ‘grammatical’ or ‘comparative’ levels.”<sup>9</sup> According to Schleiermacher, the philologists failed to reveal the author’s special insight, which was the reason for the composition in the first place and which was what gave the parts of the composition their unity. He began to search beyond the words on the printed page for the deeper, spiritual level of the work, which he called the “divinatory” or “psychological” level.<sup>10</sup> Schleiermacher’s desire

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was to get into the human author's mind and figure him out so that he could better understand what he wrote.<sup>11</sup>

Schleiermacher's "divinatory" or "psychological" level of interpretation marked the beginning of what has become known as "general" hermeneutics. Richard E. Palmer writes that "Schleiermacher has the distinction of having reconceived hermeneutics as a 'science' or 'art' of understanding."<sup>12</sup> Schleiermacher goes beyond the concept that hermeneutics is a collection of rules. He makes hermeneutics systematically coherent, "a science which describes the conditions for understanding in all dialogue." The result is not simply philological hermeneutics but a "general hermeneutics whose principles can serve as the foundation for all kinds of text interpretation."<sup>13</sup> Schleiermacher developed an understanding of hermeneutics that became the foundation for "understanding itself."<sup>14</sup> For him, hermeneutics became an art of knowing when the grammatical interpretation (objective side of interpretation) should give way to the technical interpretation (subjective side of interpretation), or vice versa.<sup>15</sup>

Milton S. Terry reflects the same distinction between general and special hermeneutics in his book *Biblical Hermeneutics*.<sup>16</sup> According to Terry, "General Hermeneutics is devoted to the general principles which are applicable to the interpretation of all languages and writing . . . . It is methodical and philosophical."<sup>17</sup> The modern hermeneutical scene is dominated by the "general" study of hermeneutics.

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Schleiermacher's shift from a language-centered to a person-centered hermeneutics expanded the discipline to encompass the debate concerning the very nature of hermeneutics itself: "How do we understand?" Schleiermacher wanted to develop a hermeneutic that would identify the fundamental unity of all types of literature. He believed that the common denominator of all literature was language. Therefore, "if the principles of all understanding of language were formulated, these would comprise a general hermeneutics . . . which would serve as the basis and core of all 'special' hermeneutics."<sup>18</sup> Schleiermacher's expansion broadened the hermeneutical discussion to include anything from traditional, specialized rules of biblical interpretation to a genuine philosophical discipline and general theory of the social and human sciences.

Anthony Thiselton brings to light in this historical evolution of hermeneutics the role that the study of language has played. Commenting on the modern hermeneutical scene, he maintains that during this period it was first realized that the study of language as "language" was *necessary* for hermeneutics. Although the modern hermeneutical scene is entirely centered in biblical criticism, the most "important recent developments have been from the standpoint of general linguistics and the relevance to biblical studies of linguistics and semantics."<sup>19</sup> According to J. P.

Louw, because of the traditional hermeneutical focal point, semantics was always concerned "only with the meaning of words rather than with the structure of meaning." This resulted in the restriction of semantics to the compiling of dictionaries. Quoting Weinreich, he notes that semantics "was strongly inclined towards . . . 'the semiotic process of naming in isolation.'"<sup>20</sup>

But the study of semantics is far more than just the meaning of the word. Semantics extends over sentence boundaries and is concerned with the meanings of sentences within the paragraphs, and the meanings of the paragraphs within the text. But it does not stop at the written word. Semantics includes broad area of meaning as it finds itself dealing with various fields of study. Louw goes on in his book to show the importance of anthropology, psychology, and philosophy when undertaking the study of semantics.<sup>21</sup>

### *From Text and Author to Text-Author and Reader*

Not only has there been a hermeneutical shift from the text to its author, but there has also been a hermeneutical shift that takes into consideration the views and presuppositions of the interpreter and reader of the text.

Men like Palmer and Thiselton have successfully driven home this important point. As Thiselton puts it, the hermeneutical problem has become the problem of the fusion of "two horizons": the horizon of the author and text and the horizon of the interpreter. The nature of the problem "is shaped by the fact that both the text and the interpreter are conditioned by their given place in history."<sup>22</sup> Palmer believes that "this merging of two horizons must be considered a basic element in all explanatory interpretation."<sup>23</sup>

The current question regarding the fusion of the two horizons revolves around trying to maintain a tension between these two idealistic extremes. One cannot simply assume that by reading the surface structure of the text and applying the necessary "scientific" rules of hermeneutics, he will automatically arrive at the right interpretation. The dilemma is not as simple as the simple sum of the meaning of the parts. Nor is it as impetuous as assuming that the reader or interpreter has the right to slaughter the text via gross eisegesis. The interpreter cannot allow his present social conditions and influences to pillage, plunder, and sack the text in order to end up, for example, with a Liberation or Feminist theology. The goal for the interpreter is to maintain a tension between the two horizons.

Modern hermeneutics has changed the focal point of interpretation. Traditionally, it was supposed or implied that if one were given the proper hermeneutical rules and they were applied to the text, then he would arrive at the proper interpretation. The underlying assumption, however, was that *all* of the rules necessary for correct interpretation were present. With the hermeneutical shifts delineated in this section, one could very well possess all of the appropriate linguistic and historical information and scientifically apply this information to the text. Yet if one were to lack the creative "art" of interpretation, he would not be able to arrive at a proper interpretation because of the problem of two horizons.<sup>24</sup>

### **MODERN LINGUISTICS**

Modern linguistics flows out of the long line of critical studies whose focal point has finally come back to the text in structural exegesis. Daniel Patte suggests that modern linguistics, with

its philosophical foundation in structuralism, will be able to answer the questions that traditional exegesis was unable to answer.<sup>25</sup>

Structuralism, in broad terms, is often traced to the social theories of Piaget.<sup>26</sup> Structural exegesis maintains that there are various structural elements to a text that move beyond the “surface structure” seen by the eye. For the modern linguist, the traditional role of grammar and syntax is only the starting point.<sup>27</sup> Modern linguistics claims to go beyond the traditional approach to a text.

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***Structural exegesis maintains that there are various structural elements to a text that move beyond the “surface structure” seen by the eye.***

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David Crystal emphasizes that linguistics is not merely philology, comparative philology, or the study of the history of a language; nor is it the learning of many languages, literary criticism, or the traditional study of grammar. Crystal sums up the traditional approach to language as *prescriptive*, whereas modern linguistics is viewed as *descriptive*. Traditional linguists were concerned about “how people ought to speak and write, usually in conformity with some standard they held dear”; thus they wrote grammars and dictionaries.<sup>28</sup> Such common standards for linguistics were logic<sup>29</sup> or a language’s historical relatedness to its predecessor<sup>30</sup> or to another language (for example, the relation of English to Latin).<sup>31</sup> Crystal writes that the chief problem with traditional linguistics is that it was never an autonomous science.

Today, a linguist is someone who researches and studies language from a scientific point of view. Science is what separates modern linguistics from traditional linguistics. Modern linguistics is a branch of the empirical sciences categorized under the social sciences.<sup>32</sup> It has an understanding of language much broader than just words, grammar, and syntax, one that includes sounds, gestures, signs, and more. As Ferdinand de Saussure writes: “The subject matter of linguistics comprises all manifestations of human speech . . . .”<sup>33</sup> The linguist is not “to introduce criteria from other aspects of human behavior, such as standards of logic, aesthetics, or literary excellence . . . .”<sup>34</sup>

The modern linguist does not observe language in order to *evaluate* its usage. Instead, the linguist is simply concerned with describing the *facts* of the utterances, to see what patterns of sound, grammar, and vocabulary are being used and in what proportions, and to explain, if possible, why one method of expression has been chosen rather than another, and so on.<sup>35</sup>

Thus the modern linguist has two tasks: to provide a complete and accurate *description* of the language that he is studying;<sup>36</sup> and “to determine the forces that are permanently and universally at work in all languages in order to deduce general laws . . . .”<sup>37</sup> He is to keep his research and observations purely linguistic. They are to be gleaned “solely out of the nature of language.”<sup>38</sup> Modern linguistics is an independent study of language as language. *Its only authority is how the community uses it.* The study of language “as

an end in itself” has created the necessary autonomy of the discipline. This autonomy, as it has been applied in linguistics over the last fifty years, has led to a more general conception of the nature and function of language.<sup>39</sup>

This brings us to the next point: What is language?

### DEFINITION OF LANGUAGE

The modern linguist has a broader view of language than does the traditional linguist. Language is not a composition of the rules that are offered to us in a grammar. Nor is language the adding up of the words according to the definitions that a dictionary provides.<sup>40</sup> Saussure, the father of modern linguistics,<sup>41</sup> defined language (*langue*) as something that “is not to be confused with human speech (*parole*), of which it is only a definite part, though certainly an essential one.” He considers language to be a “social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty.” Language belongs to both the individual and the society, and it consists of the physical, physiological, and psychological aspects of the person in that society. Language is the “concrete object” of the science of linguistics, and it is “deposited in the brain of each individual.”<sup>42</sup> Language, therefore, is much more than simply a group of words written on the page. The written word is only a substitute for speaking.<sup>43</sup> With this understanding of language, the modern linguist then moves from language to communication.

Communication takes place via “codes,” and a language (English, for example) is only one of these codes. The way one dresses, one’s body language, the color of a light (a stop light, for example), a person blushing, the DNA code within, touch, speech, and so forth, are all different codes of communication.<sup>44</sup> Rarely does communication take the form of only one of these codes, especially when it involves communication between two human beings.

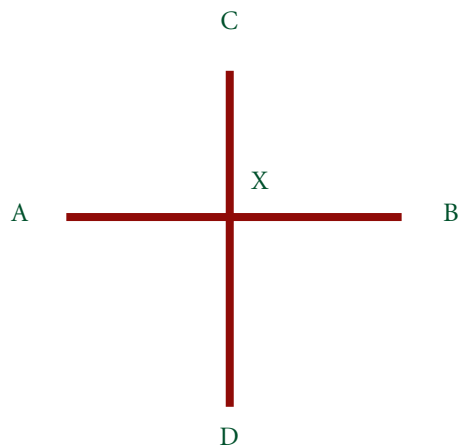
### MAIN BRANCHES OF LINGUISTICS

General linguistics is the science of language.<sup>45</sup> The most important and immediate subdivisions of general linguistics are descriptive, historical, and comparative linguistics. Descriptive linguistics is concerned with the description and analysis of the ways in which a language operates and is used by a given set of speakers at a given time. It is the predominant portion of general linguistics and is the “fundamental aspect of the study of language.”<sup>46</sup> The time element may be either the present or the past. Descriptive study is not concerned with what may have preceded the specified time element or what may have followed it, nor is it concerned with any other languages. It is readily admitted that the line between these various elements is not easily drawn.

Historical linguistics studies the ways in which languages change from one period of time to another. It researches the causes and results of such changes both inside and outside the languages. The main categories of historical linguistics are *synchronic* and *diachronic* linguistics.<sup>47</sup> Synchronic linguistics is concerned with the investigation of language at one given point in time. Diachronic linguistics is concerned with the history of developments in language (for instance, how and why the meaning of a word changes over a period of time). Traditional linguistics was dominated by diachronic linguistics. Its focal point was

the study of etymologies and the laws of development that brought them to their conclusions about meaning. Saussure, on the other hand, emphasized synchronic linguistics. He writes: “The linguist who wishes to understand a state must discard all knowledge of everything that produced it and ignore diachrony. He can enter the mind of the speakers only by suppressing the past.”<sup>48</sup>

Synchronic and diachronic linguistics are based upon their own individual procedures of study and objectives, yet they function together. “The synchronic description is the prerequisite for a proper diachronic study.”<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, the synchronic description does not depend upon the diachronic description.<sup>50</sup> Saussure drew the two areas of study as an inter-relating axis.



In this diagram AB is the synchronic “axis of simultaneities.” It is the language state at any given point in time on the line CD. CD is the history of the language and its continuing history. It is the “axis of successions.”<sup>51</sup>

According to Crystal, traditional linguistics did not appreciate this necessary distinction in the meaning of a word. He concedes that “synchronic statements may be the present-day witnesses of past developments in languages, but such statements to be made do *not* require the consideration of this historical background.”<sup>52</sup>

Finally, comparative linguistics is concerned with comparing of one or more points of view with two or more different languages, and, more generally, with the theory and techniques applicable to such comparisons. This is different from historical linguistics in that historical linguistics compares successive stages of the speech of a continuing speech community. Comparative linguistics seeks to compare two different languages that have no historical relationship.

### SYNTAGMATIC AND PARADIGMATIC RELATION

According to Bloomfield, the underlying assumption that allows the phonetic theory and language as a whole to function properly is that “in every speech-community some utterances are alike in form and meaning.” The speech-community “habitually and conventionally” discriminates some features of sound and ignores all others.<sup>53</sup> Bloomfield continues: “we have to take the specific and stable character of language as a presupposition of linguistic study . . . This virtue of speech-forms is bought at the

cost of rationality.” In other words, the underlying assumption that exists in the speech-community is trust or faith. The speech-community must have faith in itself to function within the standard parameters of communication it has adopted.

The spoken language, for scientific study, is broken down to its basic element, namely, the sounds and utterances of speech that the ear physically hears and interprets. This area of study is called phonetics. The theory upon which phonetics is based has evolved over the years and is called the phonemes. Phonemes are “the recurrent distinctive units of available sound differences in human speech.”<sup>54</sup> The phonemes are put together in an orderly fashion to produce “syllables.” Syllables are then strung together to produce “signs” (words). The signs in turn refer to the “signified.” However, the signified cannot be determined unless it is in a *syntagmatic* relationship.

The syntagmatic relationship is created when the signs are arranged in sequence on the chain of speaking or on a line. In the syntagm, the sign acquires its value only because it stands in “opposition to everything that precedes or follows it, or to both.”<sup>55</sup> For example, if one were to hold up a piece of off-white paper in the left hand and ask, “What color is this?” most would respond that it is white. But if one were to hold up a piece of paper that was truly white in his right hand and hold them together, it would become obvious that the manila paper was not really white. Its color was truly determined by how it was related to the piece of paper to which it was compared.

Saussure believed that the only definition that a sign can be given is that it is “a slice of sound which to the exclusion of everything that precedes and follows it in the spoken chain is the signifier of a certain concept.”<sup>56</sup> He held that “language is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of others.” Therefore one must begin “from the interdependent whole . . . and through analysis” obtain the value of the signs that are being used. This is the reason why it is grossly misleading to consider the relationship of the signified and the sign *only* as the union of a certain sound with a certain concept. To define a sign in this fashion would be to isolate it from its system.<sup>57</sup>

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**“(The linguist) can enter the mind of the speakers only by suppressing the past.”**

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Another element involved in determining that which is signified by the sign is its *associative* or *paradigmatic*<sup>58</sup> relation. This is like the association word game. Associations are contained in the memory of the user of the language. An associative word is a “word that stands in paradigmatic relationship to other words which might have been chosen in its place as possible substitute.”<sup>59</sup>

To illustrate the difference of meaning between syntagmatic and associative relations, Thiselton uses the two words *green* and *house*. When these words are context-free they are paradigmatic

cally understood as follows: *green* can signify such things as *unripe, inexperienced, a color, envious*, and so on; *house* can signify *dwelling place, lineage, business establishment*, and so forth. When these words stand in a syntagmatic relation (a *green house*), their meaning is clearly a dwelling place that is green in color.<sup>60</sup> In other words, context determines the “meaning” of a word or sentence. This leads to the conclusion that words “do not carry with them all the meanings which they may have in other sets of co-occurrences.”<sup>61</sup>

This brings us to semantics.

### SEMANTICS

Modern linguistics deals with the meaning of meaning through the field of semantics. The field of semantics is the study or science of meaning.<sup>62</sup> Mario Bunge divides semantics into two basic categories: empirical and nonempirical.<sup>63</sup> Empirical semantics is subdivided into linguistic semantics (the semantics of natural languages) and psycholinguistic semantics (the psychology of speech acts and contents, or the study of language users).<sup>64</sup>

Language functions on the assumption that both words and sentences have at least one meaning. Words are used to produce sentences, but the sentence is made up of words. Just because one sentence contains identical words to another sentence, however, does not necessarily mean that both have the same meaning. (For example: Cats chase dogs. Dogs chase cats.)<sup>65</sup>

In the past, meaning has been understood in terms of word and referent. This provides a concept of the meaning of a word that is concrete and able to correspond only with that word. It implies that a person speaks a word, the concrete meaning of that word is tossed through the air along with it, and the receiver of the message catches the meaning and the word together.<sup>66</sup> In modern linguistics, meaning is much more than a referential treatment of a word.<sup>67</sup>

### CONTEXT

For modern linguistics, the study of meaning embraces much of what was previously discussed, namely, the definition of language, synchronic and diachronic linguistics, and syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships. These elements are the beginning elements of linguistic semantics (or the study of meaning).<sup>68</sup> They are only the beginning of what can be labeled as the “context” of a situation. Context also implies the role of the receiver of the word as well as the sender within the historical setting. Here is where a referential theory of meaning is called upon to play a role in modern linguistics.

Crystal distinguishes between two kinds of context to determine the meaning of a linguistic sign: verbal and situation.<sup>69</sup> Both kinds of context may be immediate or removed. The *immediate verbal context* “is the formal environment in which a given piece of language is embedded—the piece whose meaning one is interested in.”<sup>70</sup> One must begin with the formal meaning of a sign and its relation to the sentence within which it is functioning, namely, its grammatical, phonological, lexical, and syntactical context. Each of these relations helps provide information that is used in determining the meaning of the sign.

The next semantic mode provides denotative information and serves as a bridge to the situation context. The *removed verbal context* refers to the meaning the sign has when it is considered apart from its narrow context, or its immediate surrounding within the sentence—“as when a whole book needs to be considered before the full meaning of any particular word or phrase is apparent.”<sup>71</sup>

The *immediate context of situation* is the situation in which the sign is actually occurring. This includes the immediate historical situation along with the positive and negative psychological reactions it invokes, whether they are discernible or not. The *removed context of situation* “is the whole cultural, historical, traditional and psychological background which may be of relevance in determining nuances, overtones, and the like.”<sup>72</sup> All four of these categories intersect in order to determine the entire meaning of any given sign.

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***Structural exegesis maintains that there are various structural elements to a text that move beyond the “surface structure” seen by the eye.***

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Discovering the semantic value of a word is no easy task. James Barr, in his “epoch-making” book *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, convincingly reveals the semantic horrors of the past. He demonstrates the flaws that existed in arriving at the “true” meaning of a word based upon the traditional etymological approach. He shows that the etymological approach

is not a statement about its meaning but about its history; it is only as a historical statement that it can be responsibly asserted, and it is quite wrong to suppose that the etymology of a word is necessarily a guide either to its “proper” meaning in a later period or to its actual meaning in that period.<sup>73</sup>

In other words, the traditional etymological approach to arriving at the semantic value (meaning) of a word was actually a journey into the diachronic linguistic use of the word. This, as was earlier stated, is not the same as the results of the meaning of a word in a specific passage.<sup>74</sup> Again, modern linguistics does not have any desire to throw out the groundwork laid down by traditional linguistics.

### GENERATIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL GRAMMAR

Before leaving the topic of semantics in modern linguistics, something needs to be said about the complex and technical area of generative transformational grammar.<sup>75</sup> Generative transformational grammar was formally cultivated by the work of Noam Chomsky.<sup>76</sup> The purpose of a transformational grammar is best stated by Chomsky:

to construct an integrated and systematic theory, which, when applied rigorously to linguistic material, gives the correct analysis for the cases where intuition (or experiment, under more desirable circumstances) makes a clear decision. Our problem is to carry out this development, to bring to light the formal patterns underlying the sentences of a language, and to show how these observed regularities might account for particular decisions about which sequences are grammatical and how these are to be understood . . . The fundamental long-term task is to provide an explanation for the general process of projection by which speakers extend their limited linguistic experience to new and immediately acceptable forms.<sup>77</sup>

Thiselton cites Nida and Taber as an example of the positive results of transformational grammar.<sup>78</sup> Nida and Taber write: “One of the most important insights coming from ‘transformational grammar’ is the fact that in all languages there are half a dozen to a dozen basic structures out of which all the more elaborate formations are constructed by means of so-called ‘transformations.’”

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***Luther’s use of the linguistic outlook of his time reflects his two-kingdom theology as it was put into practice by distinguishing between the ministerial and magisterial use of reason.***

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In contrast, *back-transformation* “is the analytic process of reducing the surface structure to its underlying kernels.” Nida and Taber go on further to state that what is even more important for translation is “that languages agree far more on the level of the kernels than on the level of the more elaborate (grammatical) structures.”<sup>79</sup> Transformational grammar seeks to make explicit elements of meaning that are implied, but not expressed, in a sentence.<sup>80</sup>

Giulio C. Lepschy notes that Chomsky’s theory of transformational grammar marks yet another shift in linguistics. Linguistics worked ever so hard to become an autonomous science, as “language considered in and for itself.” But now Chomsky has re-established its links with other fields, especially psychology.<sup>81</sup>

Looking back, at least eight different categories have been presented that must be weighed in order to determine the semantic value of a word. These categories (and the many others that exist in the study of semantic value) were developed to assure the interpreter that he seeks the meaning of the words according to the meaning of the words in their context. Chomsky’s transformation theory, however, has brought linguistics full circle. Chomsky now places the study of meaning back into the larger context of psychology and worldview.

## CONCLUSION

Thiselton writes: “The interpreter of the New Testament must respect the distinctive particularity of meaning conveyed by individual passages, and resist the temptation to interpret them wholly in the light of pre-understanding already decisively shaped by the interpretation of other passages.”<sup>82</sup> The emphasis in general linguistics is on context, field, and structure. These principles are designed to uphold the “distinctive particularity of meaning.” The goal of the scientific study of language is to return to the text and let the text speak for itself. One must question how the linguistic world will judge Chomsky’s generative grammar, considering his return to the psychological aspect of interpretation.

The preceding presentation serves only as a brief introduction to modern linguistics. There is much more that could be said about each of the areas discussed—for instance, an in-depth philosophical discussion of structuralism as the undercurrent of modern linguistics (which was purposely avoided). The scientific study of language continues to march on.<sup>83</sup> It is hoped that this study has primarily shown where modern linguistics fits into the big picture of the history of hermeneutics. Secondly, it is hoped that this introduction to the thought and work of modern linguistics will assist the Lutheran exegete in learning more about modern linguistics.

And yet the question still to be addressed is the usefulness of modern linguistics for the confessional Lutheran. Modern linguistics provides a set of tools with which the Lutheran exegete may work. The foregoing presentation reveals certain pitfalls that have become all too common with exegesis. The synchronic and diachronic perspective may assist the exegete in not falling into the trap of reading the etymological history of a word into the word’s meaning in a particular context. This is nothing new, but modern linguistics does provide a clear distinction between the two perspectives as well as guidelines to keep one from forcing more meaning into a word than the author or structure allows.

It is important to note that modern linguistics is built to some extent upon traditional linguistics. The two disciplines often intersect in practice.<sup>84</sup> As already noted, modern linguistics has a structuralist philosophy as its foundation. What needs to be explored is how the philosophical rules of structuralism will influence negatively the *sola scriptura* principle of Lutheranism. Any form of linguistics—traditional, modern or otherwise—will have a philosophy that may, because of sinful human nature, desire to become the judge of God’s Word rather than a tool. A Lutheran exegete must learn well what Luther taught so clearly about the influence of philosophy upon language.

Luther’s linguistic outlook (as also reflected in the Lutheran Confessions) was the one that ruled in his time and was produced from scholasticism, which had its roots in Aristotelian philosophy and logic. Luther clearly addressed the problems of said philosophical foundation when the philosophy that produced the tools (categories such as *usus loquendi*, *sensu literalis*, subject, copula, predicate, and the like) began to rule over the confessed theology of the church—and in no less of an important article of faith as the Lord’s Supper. His use of the linguistic outlook of his time reflects his two-kingdom theology as it was put into practice by distinguishing between the ministerial and magisterial use of reason. For Luther, this immediately brought forth the question of the relationship between reason and revelation.

It is unnecessary to rehearse the entire battle between Luther and Karlstadt over the Lord's Supper, but will do simply to stress that the point of contention concerning the literal versus the figurative translation of "This is my body" is a discussion of the general relationship between subjects and predicates. In Luther's "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper" (1528) he devotes no fewer than ten pages to the "The Law of Identical Predication."<sup>85</sup> This law, invoked against Luther, states that "identical predication of diverse natures is untenable both in Scripture and in reason, i.e., the idea that two diverse natures should be identical." Luther agrees with his opponents that two diverse substances cannot be one substance. He says: "For example, an ass cannot be an ox, a man cannot be a stone or a piece of wood." But Luther maintains that although this is true, one must not let his offended reason become the ruler of the clear text of Scripture because "two distinct substances, bread and body, are spoke of as one object or substance."<sup>86</sup> The person must allow his reason to be taken captive by the simple testimony of God's holy Word. The result is a new predication applying solely to what God has given in the Sacrament—that is, sacramental predication that allows bread and body as one substance. Luther writes:

For since we are confronted by God's words, "This is my body"—distinct, clear, common, definite words, which certainly are not trope, either in Scripture or in any language—we must embrace them with faith, and allow our reason to be blinded and taken captive. So, not as hairsplitting sophistry dictates but as God says them for us, we must repeat these words after him and hold to them.<sup>87</sup>

What Luther has done is to invoke his understanding of the ministerial use of reason. He will not allow his "offended reason" to run roughshod over God's clear and simple words. He then proves from Scripture passages concerning the Trinity, the Personal Union, and the revelation of the Holy Spirit as a dove that Scripture does overrule the law of identical predication.<sup>88</sup>

This is the heart of the *sola scriptura* principle, that we humbly accept the message or the treasures God has given to us. Our human reason is used as a tool to grab on to that which God has given. Although our reason may be used magisterially when trying to work out the rules of linguistics, modern or traditional, it does not mean that the reason that produced the linguistic categories may overrule the message given by God.

When the Lutheran exegete sets out to use the tools of modern linguistics, he must keep this lesson from Luther in mind. Using modern linguistics may prove to shore up that which is already confessed due to sharper exegetical tools, yet it will not produce any new message from God's Word. The exegete can adopt Chemnitz's advice given as he pondered the nature of predication in the Lord's Supper:

Some call it a sacramental predication because of the sacramental union, to indicate that the Sacrament consists of two parts. It is commonly called an irregular predication, because it does not fit the usual rules of predica-

tion. *But it does not matter by what name it is called as long as we correctly understand the method of predication and as long as the heart of the matter as it is taught in Scripture remains unimpaired* (emphasis added).<sup>89</sup>

Likewise, when the Lutheran exegete begins to use these different tools of modern linguistics, as with all other changes in the church, he must keep in mind the reason for the change. Will the new exegetical tools strengthen the proclamation of the Gospel? The preliminary answer is yes. The added categories and study of language will assist the Lutheran exegete in various areas, especially the relationship between an expanded role of verbal and situation context. These principles always played a role in traditional exegesis, yet they were not as clearly spelled out.<sup>90</sup>

It seems that modern linguistics has also served as a wake-up call for confessional church bodies. Since the battles for inerrancy and the encroachment of the higher critical method into the American Christian scene, it appears that confessional Lutheran exegetes have fallen behind in the last twenty years of exegetical and hermeneutical study. We must never take lightly the importance of recognizing the danger of higher criticism, yet at the same time we must never stop studying the importance of hermeneutics and its tools or fall into the easy and comfortable world of repristination. This author works mostly with traditional exegesis in his work, only slowly applying various modern linguistic tools where they can apply.

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### *Luther will not allow his "offended reason" to run roughshod over God's clear and simple words.*

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This author believes that there are many areas, such as those cited in this paper, that do provide a sharper understanding of the meaning of words. Yet is this a call for the abandonment of traditional linguistics? *Μὴ γένοιτο*. These tools are cautiously put forth for further study and application, with the linguistic battles of Luther as well as the honorable conservative Lutherans of the 1960s and 1970s borne always in mind.

This author eagerly looks forward to more study and application of modern linguistics by confessional Lutheran exegetes. One is hard pressed to find articles or commentaries written by confessional Lutherans who are exploring this field. At this time, the author is aware of only one book that is scheduled for publication by a confessional Lutheran concerning the topic of modern linguistics. James W. Voelz (professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis) will deal with this topic in his forthcoming publication *What Does This Mean?: Biblical Hermeneutics in the Post-Modern World*.<sup>91</sup> It is to be hoped that Dr. Voelz will shed some more light on the tools of structural exegesis from a confessional Lutheran perspective. This author eagerly awaits further study and evaluation. LOGIA

## NOTES

1. See the following authors for further divisions of hermeneutical periods: Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. 34; Robert M. Grant, "History of the Interpretation of the Bible: Ancient Period," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, p. 106; F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961), p. 12.
2. R. H. Robins, *General Linguistics: An Introductory Survey* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 373.
3. Robbins, p. 374.
4. Robbins, p. 374.
5. Robert M. Grant, *The Bible in the Church*, p. 109. This quote is also the opening sentence in A. Skevinton, *Luther's Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (London: Tyndale Press, 1960).
6. Farrar, p. 323.
7. Farrar, p. 323.
8. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, ed. Hein/Kimmerle, trans. James Duke and H. Jackson Forstman, American Academy of Religion Text and Translations Series 1 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977). See also Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, passim. The translators of Schleiermacher's *Hermeneutik* comment on Palmer's book as being "the best introduction to the history of modern hermeneutics available in English," p. 235, n. 1. Another fine study on modern hermeneutics is Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1980).
9. Roy J. Howard, *Three Faces of Hermeneutics* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), p. 9.
10. Howard, p. 9.
11. Schleiermacher, vol. 1, p. 42: "In interpretation it is essential that one be able to step out of one's own frame of mind into that of the author."
12. Palmer, p. 40; Schleiermacher, vol. 3, p. 95.
13. Palmer, p. 40.
14. Palmer, p. 40.
15. Schleiermacher, p. 42.
16. Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), p. 17.
17. Terry, p. 17. The second category, "Special Hermeneutics," is devoted to the explanation of particular books and classes of writings. Writings such as historical, poetical, philosophical, prophetic, and many others, require specialized rules and principles designed for their specific needs. This category falls under the first definition of traditional hermeneutics.
18. Palmer, p. 84.
19. Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, p. 117. J. P. Louw, *Semantics of New Testament Greek* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 3, reports that twenty-five years ago "it would have been unusual to find any study concerning semantics in a linguistic publication. Roughly a quarter of such publications today are concerned with the subject of semantics in one way or another." The following books are devoted to the study of semantics: F. R. Palmer, *Semantics: A New Outline* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Mario Bunge, "Treatise on Basic Philosophy," vol. 1, *Semantics 1: Sense and Reference*, vol. 2 *Semantics 2: Interpretation and Truth* (Boston, Massachusetts: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1974); James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961); Stephen Ullman, *Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1962).
20. Louw, pp. 2, 3.
21. Louw, pp. 5–19.
22. Thiselton, *Two Horizons* p. 16.
23. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, p. 25.
24. Thiselton, *Two Horizons* p. 5.
25. See Daniel Patte, *What is Structural Exegesis?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 1–20. It must be noted that for Patte, traditional exegesis includes the various critical (e.g., text, form, redaction criticism) approaches to the Scriptures. Patte provides a concise presentation of the place of structural exegesis in the role of hermeneutical thought.
26. See Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Great Britain: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1978), pp. 15–18. He writes that structure consists of an arrangement of several entities: (a) the idea of wholeness; (b) the idea of transformation; and (c) the idea of self-regulation.
27. Patte, p. 24.
28. David Crystal, *What is Linguistics?* (London: Edward Arnold Press, 1974), pp. 5, 22.
29. Ferdinand De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. C. Bally et. al. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 6. Noam Chomsky: "It is certainly correct that logic is indispensable for formalizing theories, of linguistics or anything else, but this fact gives us no insight into what sort of systems form the subject matter for linguistics, or how it should treat them . . . Though logic can be applied with profit to the construction of a formalized linguistic theory, it does not follow that this theory is in any sense about logic or any other formalized system." *The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory* (New York: Plenum Press, 1977), p. 84.
- For a fine example of the foundational use of logic in explaining the function of language, see Otto Jespersen, *The Philosophy of Grammar* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1963; first published in 1924). He provides an interesting discussion on the use of the copula. This discussion is found in an appendix to chapter 9. The study of the copula is noteworthy, especially for the confessional Lutheran. Confessional Lutheranism has always fought for the "logical" understanding of the copula (pp. 131 ff.). See C. P. Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology* (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Press, 1913), pp. 613 ff. This rebuttal of a logical foundation is one that the Reformed have grasped in order to bolster their interpretation of the Lord's Supper. One such argument is presented in G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1980), pp. 100 ff.
30. Manfred Bierwisch, *Modern Linguistics: Its Development, Methods and Problems* (Paris: Mouton the Hage, 1971), p. 12.
31. See Crystal, *What Is Linguistics?* p. 12, for a clear example of this.
32. Crystal, *What is Linguistics?* p. 29; Robins, p. 8.
33. Saussure, p. 6.

34. Crystal, *What Is Linguistics?* p. 26.
35. Crystal, *What Is Linguistics?* p. 8.
36. Crystal, *What Is Linguistics?* p. 26.
37. Saussure, p. 6.
38. Crystal, *What Is Linguistics?* p. 26. It is very important to stress that this does not imply that the various fields previously mentioned, such as logic, rhetoric, philosophy, etc., have nothing to do with language. The difference between the traditional and the modern view of language is that in the former these subjects were considered to be the controlling device of language. In the latter, they merely play a role in the total make up of language.
39. John Lyons, *New Horizons in Linguistics* (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973), p. 8.
40. In Roman Jakobson, *Main Trends in The Science of Language* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1973), a fine presentation of the sociological nature of modern linguistics can be found. Later in the same book (p. 57), Jakobson shows an extremely fascinating relationship between linguistics and the natural sciences. His presentation concludes with a discussion of teleology and the thought that “it is language which created humans, rather than humans language” when contemplating the role of the human nervous system.
41. Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, p. 119.
42. Saussure, pp. 7–13, 9, 23. Jespersen writes: “The essence of language is human activity—activity on the part of one individual to make himself understood by another, and activity on the part of that other to understand what was in the mind of the first” (*The Philosophy of Grammar*, p. 2).
43. Jespersen, p. 2. One of the cardinal principles of modern linguistics is that “spoken language is more basic than written language” (John Lyons, *Language and Linguistics: An Introduction* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981], p. 11).
44. Eugene A. Nida, *Signs, Sense, Translation* (Roggebaai, Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa, 1985), p. 12. Nida distinguishes between three different codes: ambient semiotic, somatic, and endosemiotic (*Signs, Sense, Translation*, pp. 12–15).
45. Robins, p. 1. Modern linguistics is also divided according to various schools. Ferdinand De Saussure is most often discussed on his own terms and is considered separately from the other schools. The other schools are: (a) The Prague School; (b) The Copenhagen School; and (c) The American School. See Giulio C. Lepschy, *A Survey of Structural Linguistics* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970).
46. Robins, pp. 4, 5.
47. See Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, p. 125, and Saussure, pp. 79–94. In Saussure one finds examples and a chart to explain further the differences between these two concepts.
48. Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, p. 125.
49. David Crystal, *Linguistics, Language and Religion* (London: Burns and Oates, 1965), p. 58.
50. Thiselton notes that Barr’s book, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, is an example of the relevance of this linguistic principle. Thiselton writes: “He [Barr] points out that many of the standard reference works in biblical studies tend to encourage the method of arriving at conclusions about meaning on the basis of etymology . . . Barr convincingly shows that they have overlooked the particularity of meaning suggested by synchronic investigation” (*Two Horizons*, pp. 125–126).
51. Crystal, *Linguistics, Language, and Religion*, p. 58. Saussure, p. 79.
52. Crystal, p. 58.
53. Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1933), pp. 79, 144.
54. Robins, p. 138. The phonemes are further broken down into other categories, i.e., segmental phonemes, phones, allophones, and others. Tone is also taken into consideration in the theory of phonemes.
55. Saussure, p. 123. Lyons refers to the syntagmatic relationship as the “combinatory” relationship. *Language and Linguistics*, p. 96.
56. Saussure used the term “signifier” to identify the sound that the person makes when he puts all of the individual sounds together to form a word (p. 104).
57. Saussure, pp. 114, 113.
58. “Associative” is the term Saussure used for this concept (p. 123). “Paradigmatic” is the term commonly used today (Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, p. 127). Lyons uses the term “substitutional” to avoid any confusion: “relations that hold among sets of intersubstitutable elements at particular places in syntagms” (*Language and Linguistics*, p. 96).
59. Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, p. 127.
60. Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, p. 127.
61. Eugene A. Nida, as quoted in Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, p. 128.
62. For a brief historical review of the term *semantics* and the study of meaning, see F. R. Palmer. *Semantics: A New Outline*, pp. 1–15. This book is short and easy to read. See also John Lyons, *Language and Linguistics*, pp. 136–176.
63. Bunge, p. 1ff.
64. For the purposes of this study, there is no need to go into the subdivisions of nonempirical semantics other than to list them here. Nonempirical semantics is divided between basic (general) linguistics and applied (special) linguistics. Bunge further divides applied linguistics into the semantics of mathematics, science, and ordinary knowledge. Bunge also provides an explanatory graphic (pp. 1–2).
65. Ruth M. Kempson provides examples of this in *Cats Chase Dogs. Dogs Chase Cats* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 3.
66. Crystal, *Linguistics, Language and Religion*, p. 92.
67. Take the word “meaning.” It currently has over twenty different meanings according to its usage (Crystal, *Linguistics, Language and Religion*, p. 90).
68. See Crystal’s explanation and diagram of the triadic concept of meaning in *Linguistics, Language, and Religion*, pp. 95–98.
69. Crystal, *Linguistics, Language, and Religion*, pp. 99–100.
70. Crystal, *Linguistics, Language, and Religion*, p. 99.
71. Crystal, *Linguistics, Language, and Religion*, p. 100.
72. Crystal, *Linguistics, Language, and Religion*, p. 100.
73. Barr, p. 109. For the importance of Barr’s book, see Anthony C. Thiselton, “Semantics and New Testament Interpretation,” in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), p. 75.
74. Barr shows the flaws of several linguistic theories of semantic value in his book. He shows how much the contrast between

Greek and Hebrew thought has foolishly influenced the linguistic conclusions of traditional linguistics (p. 8 ff.). A section on the false assumptions of the “true etymological” meaning of words is presented along with examples in chapter six (p. 107 ff.). Chapter eight analyzes and criticizes some of the principles of Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Thiselton’s article “Semantics and New Testament Interpretation” outlines six false assumptions with which interpretation in the past has been plagued (p. 76).

75. Thiselton, “Semantics,” p. 95.

76. See Noam Chomsky, *The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory and Current Issues in Linguistic Theory* (London: Mouton and Co, 1964). See also J. P. B. Allen and Paul Van Buren, *Chomsky: Selected Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Ronald Wardhaugh, *Introduction to Linguistics* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972), pp. 99-137. Palmer, *Semantics*, p. 151, also gives a short overview of generative grammar. He writes that scholars argue whether such a deep structure actually exists: “if there is a deep structure, it is not syntactic but semantic.”

77. Chomsky, *The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory*, p. 6.

78. Thiselton, “Semantics,” p. 96.

79. Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Vol. 7 of *Helps for Translators* (Leiden: Brill, 1982.), p. 39.

80. Thiselton maintains that transformational techniques are already employed in New Testament exegesis and traditional grammar by implication. He cites the traditional contrast between objective and subjective genitives. See Thiselton, “Semantics,” p. 97, where he uses “the testimony of Christ” (1 Cor 1:6) as an example.

81. Lepschy, p. 126.

82. Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, p. 128.

83. For example, Thiselton introduces the difference between the various subdivisions of semiotics, which include the following: syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, p. 122).

84. See this author’s STM thesis, in which a side by side comparison of “Synchronic Semantic Value” and *Usus Loquendi* is presented to show their similarities and differences. Mark Sell, “A Study to Identify and Evaluate the Proper and Improper Use of Modern Linguistics in Confessional Lutheran Hermeneutics Based upon the Intersecting Relationship of the Modern Linguistic Principle of ‘Synchronic Semantic Value’ and the Traditional Linguistic Principle Known as the *Usus Loquendi*,” unpublished STM Thesis, 1991.

85. AE 37:294-303.

86. AE 37:295.

87. AE 37:296.

88. AE 37:296-300.

89. Martin Chemnitz, *The Lord’s Supper*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), p. 55.

90. This author believes that meaning and context in hermeneutics has a tremendous amount to say concerning the current struggles of the church and her *Gottesdienst*. The “removed context of situation” as a scientific category helps us to understand that the Bible itself does have a context, the church. Yet the church also has a context, the sinful world. We cannot fall into the Platonic noose of separating the church from the Word, nor the Word from the church. They are incarnationally bound.

91. James W. Voelz, *What Does This Mean? Biblical Hermeneutics in the Post-Modern World*, (St. Louis: CPH, 1995 [forthcoming]).

# The Uniqueness of the Christian Scriptures

## The Scriptures in the Context of History

ARNOLD J. KOELPIN



A singular uniqueness of the Christian Bible is that it is anchored in history. On the surface this assertion may fly right over our heads. After all, are not the scriptures of other religions similarly unique? Does not a course in world religions demonstrate that ancient Hindu Vedas from the East and the Book of Mormon in the West exemplify writings that also claim to be anchored in history? Is not the claim for the uniqueness of the Christian Scriptures just another case of Christian *chutzpah* instilled from its Judeo-Christian past?

The questions are valid. They do not merely focus our attention on the task of comparative religions. They are especially important for the understanding of a biblical hermeneutic.

This presentation does not intend to compare the Christian Scriptures to those of other world religions. Our task is to gain a perspective for a fruitful discussion by showing how the Christian Scriptures relate to the course of human history. By drawing from the Scriptures' own self-understanding, we aim to sharpen our awareness of the uniqueness of the Christian Scriptures in one respect: their understanding and use of history.

This goal demands that we know how the Christian Scriptures understand history. Only then are we able to turn this insight around and use history as a tool to understand the Scripture text. In the interrelation of the understanding and use of history lies the secret of the Christian faith and its testimony to the world. Why? Because all Christian understanding and study of history is anchored in God himself.

### THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY

In Christian belief God created history “in the beginning” when he created “the heavens and the earth” and all that they contain (Gn 1). In the widest sense, all history is set in God’s time and space. Time and space are two basic divine dimensions in which “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). They are, as it were, the box that God made for mankind, the crown of his creation, to live in. When time began, God created the universe in its length and breadth and depth. He made its “woodlands, fields and meadows,” its sights and sounds and smells.

As elementary as it may sound, people and events operate on the stage of history at certain times and in certain places. In the annals of history we keep track of nations and circumstances through the medium of chronology and geography. They contextualize life, not as happenstances, but as part of God’s good earth, his creative order. Pegging things chronologically and geographically helps us to sort out happenings from one another and to tell their story.

It is important to know “time” and “placement.” Abraham did not live at the time of Moses. Abraham was a nomad in Palestine before the great lawgiver led the nation of Israel back to it. Consequently, the Hebrew patriarch did not live under the restrictions of the Mosaic Law-code given some 430 years later. He lived by faith in God’s universal promise made to him. And St. Paul explains the historical significance of the difference in Galatians 3. As in any human testament, Paul writes, the law cannot change the prior promise. So Moses’ Law served as a necessary codicil to the Abrahamic Promise until Christ came.

Similarly, it is historically important to know that Mohammed did not live before Christ (B.C.) but in Arabia some six hundred years after Christ (A.D.). The difference in time and place helps to contextualize an understanding of the two religions, both of which claim Abraham as their own. In this way, time and space rescue our understanding from pure abstraction. When we tell the story, they give present reality to what happened in the past. Time and space help us to store and retrieve the story from the memory bank of history for our learning and edification.

### The LORD of History

Now all this which is history and life—because history is life—will not make sense to us unless we understand that God controls history. And God’s lordship over life only makes sense when we face the secret of history itself.

### Mastering History

To our human eye, history is nonsense. As Henry Ford unabashedly stated on the witness stand, “History is bunk.” History perplexes us because it is inexact, illogical, irrational, and disturbs our innate sense of perfection—the way things ought to be. As a result we grow frustrated precisely because we can neither master nor control history. Time just appears to

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keep flowing on endlessly on this spaceship Earth. In frustration we ask ourselves: What is it all about? What is the meaning of life and the significance of history?

Left alone to judge from experience, we necessarily conclude that chance or randomness govern life. “Good luck!” is our wish for life. There is no fixed point to which we are attached. The moment we imagine that we can control life, the means by which we hoped to master it turns on us and increases our fear and frustration. Whether we rely on moral codes, atomic fission, probability printouts, or stun guns, the forces of destruction are crouched, like a lion, under cover.

How can we judge otherwise when wickedness flourishes and the righteous suffer? Confucius sadly observed that “the wicked often prosper and the efforts of the good sometimes come to naught.”<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther noted how “proverbs and that parent of proverbs, experience, testify that ‘the bigger the scoundrel, the greater his luck’” (Job 12:6; Ps 73:12). In assessing the story of individuals and nations, even the greatest minds crash on the question of history’s meaning. So in our philosophies we end up “denying the existence of God and imagining that all things are moved at random by blind Chance or Fortune” (AE 33:291).

### *God Is in Control*

But thank God, there is another way! It is the way of faith in history’s LORD. The uniqueness of the Christian Scriptures is that they testify to Scripture’s LORD in the context of history itself. In the Scriptures, God is not an abstraction, a force that exists outside the realities of history. Nor is he caught within history’s bounds. The omnipotent God who created all things is not an unknown god, a make-believe being known only by a set of truths and wonders, or a mythological creature whose image needs to be fashioned in wood or stone or metal to be real. All such gods are gods of our own making (Is 44:9–20). They are powerless idols and only reflect the desired power of our impotence.

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***There still remains no creaturely activity from which God is detached.***

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The Lord of history is history’s LORD. He is a God who acts. In his omnipotence, he frees our world from the closed systems of causal relations that plague our understanding of life. Mankind the producer of things as a creative artisan (*homo faber*) may indeed extend the boundaries of the possible by trying to master space or by controlling the conscious or even the subconscious. A single dominant person may undeniably alter world affairs in a brief period of time.

But as observable as these historical facts may be in the human record, there still remains no creaturely activity from which God is detached. The Lord of history is in and over all human decisions and historical events. What makes God to be God is his omnipotent will. In a perceptive passage, Martin Luther countered the historical vision of every humanist by asserting:

He is God and for his will there is no cause or reason that can be laid down as a rule or measure for it, since there is nothing equal or superior to it, but [his will] is itself the rule of all things. For if there were any rule or standard for it, either as cause or reason, it could no longer be the will of God. For it is not because he is or was obliged so to will that what he wills is right, but on the contrary, because he himself so wills, therefore what happens must be right. Cause and reason can be assigned for a creature’s will, but not for the will of the Creator, unless you set up over him another creator (AE 33:181).

Scary? Not really. All this word says is that “He’s got the whole world in his hands. He’s got you and me, brother and sister, in his hands.” In all historical happenings, therefore, God is the essential doer. It means that nothing happens without history’s LORD, as many a Psalm testifies (see Ps 139).

What an atom does, what an electron does, what a seed does when it germinates, what the body of a mother does when it bears a child, what a farmer accomplishes when he sows his field, what a merchant does when he closes a business transaction, what a young man does when he decides on a specific profession, when a man and a woman marry, when a nation establishes for itself a peculiar system of government, when people revolt, when armies fight a war—all these activities are . . . only the facade of an occurrence whose inner side is God Himself, present in this event with His effective power.<sup>2</sup>

The living presence of God in all history puts us in a special relationship with the Creator, a relationship that can never be neutral. What is created is always in the hands of its Creator. “Where does a person who hopes in God end up except in his own nothingness?” Luther observes. “But when a person goes into nothingness, does he not merely return to that from which he came? Since he comes from God and his own non-being, it is to God that he returns when he returns to nothingness. For even though a person falls out of himself and out of all creation, it is impossible for him to fall out of God’s hand, because all creation is surrounded by God’s hand. So, run through the world; but where are you running? Always into God’s hand and lap” (WA 5, 168).

### *The Lord of History is History’s LORD*

In the Christian view of history (*Weltanschauung*), God’s monergistic activity is a great comfort. It is joyous and certain because the Scriptures reveal a point of view that transcends our present history of time and space. “We should transfer ourselves outside time,” Luther advised, “and look at our life with the eyes of God.”<sup>3</sup>

Why is that? Because God views all history from the perspective of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*). The end toward which all life is pressing is not chaotic, like Satan’s attacks on God’s good creative order. In God’s will, St. Paul informs us, history’s goal is “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.” This is the “mystery of [God’s] will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment” (Eph 1:9 f).

*The LORD Uniquely Revealed*

Does God's monergistic activity, then, make puppets of us all? If God conceals his will in a mystery (1 Cor 2:7), are we merely play-acting while God pulls the strings? Not at all. Even though we act in history and act responsibly, we cannot determine God's will merely by observing what happens historically. On the surface, historical facts only reveal the things we do and what happens around us. We cannot deduce God's intentions from them. Why is that? Simply because the Scriptures reveal that God works, as it were, behind a mask. History is his cocoon behind which he operates in loving concern for his creation, which lives in bondage to sin, death, and Satan.

Moses once tried to unmask God. On Sinai's mount, he asked to see God face to face in his bare and unveiled glory. But God turned him down flat. "Nobody can see God and live," the LORD told him. But God did permit Moses to see him from the backside. "I will put you in a cleft in the rock," God said, "and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen" (Ex 33:18–23).

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*The use of history in interpretation is inherently interconnected to the text itself.*

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From the backside, the LORD of history uniquely reveals himself contrary to appearances. God's backside—as he passes by historically—is not what we expect God to be like. The backside does not attract us as does the glory of the face. The backside reveals God's shame (Is 53:2–5). It masks his saving acts among men in the reverse of normal appearances. God revealed his glory by hiding it. He covered his majesty by cloaking it. In the incarnation, he put on the mantle of a creature and covered himself with our shameful wickedness. God's Son entered our time and space as one of us, in a place called Bethlehem, at a time when Quirinius was governor of Syria (Lk 2:2), to redeem the time.

As unbelievable as it may seem, God's Son really and truly exchanged places with us—the Prince with the pauper (Gal 4:4f). Contrary to all expectation and appearances, God's Son clothed himself in flesh and blood so he could historically effect a great exchange. He traded the white robe of his righteousness for our filthy rags (Is 64:6), washed our clothes in his blood, and then covered us with the garment of salvation (Is 61:10). We will never understand this joyous exchange of his death for our life. Only the Spirit of the living God takes the mystery of the cross out of the realm of unbelievable history (1 Cor 2:10–16).

*Scripture's Self-Understanding*

But it matters for Scriptures' understanding of history that we hear the story. History is his story. It is God's word to the world. Both Old and New Testaments proclaim his mighty acts

in our time and in our space. The Christian God revealed in the Scriptures is not an abstraction; he is personal and real. His activities reveal God's love for the world (Jn 3:16) and his judgments on all unbelief (Mt 24 and 25). The same all-powerful Word that called time and space into being is strong to save. In creative love, the Lord of history personally changed the course of history by becoming our Savior and our Lord.

In a survey of the Scripture, Martin Franzmann testified that "nowhere, in any aspect of it, does this word lose its character as history." He then, in a grand summation, clarifies in what sense God's Word is historical:

It has a history, being the crown and fulfillment of God's previous actions and promises; it *is history*—the recital of the mighty works of God that culminate in that epochal history when God dealt decisively with the sin of man in His Servant Jesus of Nazareth; and it *makes history*—it is the word of the Lord, and the Spirit of the Lord moves creatively in it. It calls upon men to turn, and turns them, and thus catches men up into God's last great movement in history toward God's last goal."<sup>4</sup>

The desired outcome of God's acts of love in our time and space is to have us live with God always—in time and in eternity (2 Tim 1:9–10).

**THE USE OF HISTORY IN CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES**

The Christian understanding of this awesome sweep and scope of history makes the study of history an indispensable tool for understanding life and the Scriptures that unveil life. Because the LORD of history is simultaneously the Lord in history, the study of history helps us to interpret the Scripture text. Time and space put life in context; they serve no less a purpose in interpreting the Scriptures.

The task requires modesty. If the Christian understanding of history teaches us one thing, it is that we cannot sit in judgment over the Scripture text. God not only crafts history, he also crafted the Bible record (2 Tim 3:16). This means two things with regard to reading Scripture. First and foremost, Scripture is a seamless whole and will be its own interpreter. But equally important, comprehending its view of history (*Weltanschauung*) requires the Spirit of its Creator. Without the Spirit of God the marvelous uniqueness of the Scriptures will bypass us (AE 33:28).

To approach the Scriptures in modesty requires that we use a number of tools. History is an important tool, though not the only one at our disposal. The use of history in interpretation is inherently interconnected to the text itself and to its specific terms.

*The Circles of Interpretation*

For understanding the Scriptures, these three—terms, text, and historical context—work in harmony to convey the scriptural meaning. There is nothing particularly unique in this approach. The skill of exegesis is common to all reading and communication. E. C. Hirsch's bestseller *Cultural Literacy* recently highlighted how closely history and language interrelate for reading a text. He calls the combination of language and culture "a nation's dictionaries."<sup>5</sup>

Knowledge of both history and language are important for the learning process, Hirsch concludes, because they provide core information stored in the memory.<sup>6</sup> Without a knowledge of explicit words and the historical background, the text often just hangs there. The story is out of focus. We cannot integrate what is written because the words fly past us, as does the setting. Our understanding becomes fragmentary. We end up processing information, but not really comprehending. The facts are disconnected from the sense. And we grow bored. Here history comes to our rescue; it integrates what we read or hear by providing a real-life setting.

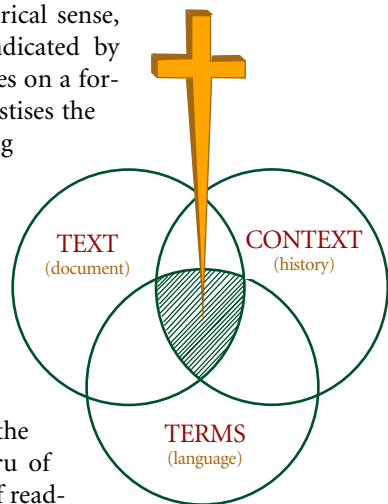
### *In Historical Context*

In God's own way, one of the major purposes of history is to provide a lifelike context for communicating his word. Without the context, reading the text could become a mere straining at words. The text loses its simple historical sense, and, unless otherwise indicated by the words themselves, takes on a foreign meaning. Luther chastises the rabbis for getting so hung up on words in the Talmud that the Old Testament became a code book, little different from its Roman Catholic counterpart in the Book of Canon Law (WA TR 5, 5670).

But neither does the historian become the guru of interpretation. The skill of reading the text historically must never isolate itself from the specific words and from the flow of the text itself. Historicists overvalue history as a determinant of events. Like their rabbinical counterparts, they can get so hung up on the time/place contexts that the Lord of history revealed in the cross recedes into the background.<sup>7</sup> For the grammarian and the historian, the cross must remain the touchstone of interpretation. The text remains out of focus unless the cross (the Gospel) intersects and enlightens it.

In writing to the Romans, St. Paul complains about his people, not because they lack zeal for God, but because "their zeal is not based on knowledge" (Rom 10:2). The knowledge they lacked was not Scripture words or Scripture history. The Torah and the Ancient Scriptures were sacred to Jews. They were as schooled in looking for outward signs as the Greeks were in great systems of thought. But both Jews and Greeks stumbled when it came to the wisdom of the cross (1 Cor 1:22).

Why was that so? Paul explains the problem simply: "Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (Rom 10:3). Their moral and ethical life had taken on a life of its own instead of life "in Christ" (Eph 1:3–14). Both philosophies of life failed to understand that the Lord of history is history's LORD.



### *History in the Service of Theology*

The modest role for which God created time and place in our history can best be seen by reading the Scriptures themselves. There the great deeds and promises of God are laid in the cradle of the historical. People and places serve God's will. Nature and nations bow to his ways. Time does not just tick by like the second hand of a clock. God waits for the ripe time (*καίρος*) when things are readied, like grain for the harvest, to carry out his good and gracious will.

### *In the Ancient World*

Thus the promised Savior of the world from Abraham's lineage is not immediately shazamed into being. Abraham, the father of believers, must himself first father a line and secure the land before the time of fulfillment. He does beget the son of promise in old age in a way beyond all human comprehension. But the land must wait four generations to be secured for a reason: "The sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure" (Gn 15:16).

Subsequently, Israel waits and is tested in Egypt; Canaan is plunged into its own undoing. Thus the history of nations unfolds and we can follow each in its extant literature and records. Divine mercy accompanies the sweatboxes of the former nation's slavery in the high civilization of Egypt. Divine judgment stands over the Baal altars and Asherah poles of the other. In God's good time—some four hundred years later—Abraham's children seize the promised land from the native Canaanites.

The lesson of history is clear from Scripture. *God guides the destiny of the world in such a way that nations and peoples, advanced civilizations and creative cultures, serve the ongoing course of his gospel.* We read their history and hear their story in all its graphic detail and learn to know: history is the handmaiden of God's Word.

The history of Israel's prophets does not differ from the history of Israel's earlier times. It also is not abstract mythology, detached from time and place and from humanity. It smells of the earth and is earthy. It moves within the framework of datable kings and datable events. God's people, Israel and Judah, are caught in the power politics of Babylon and Assyria and Egypt. We are led by history's habits of the mind to study the maps and the chronology of events to put the prophets' message in context. We read the literature and chronicles of the nations to understand what is happening. In the records, many thoughts, places and events are spelled out concretely.

But times and geography and people do not dictate the course of history. In all that happens, God is in control, and he says as much in graphic and earthy terms through the mouth of his prophets. "This is what the LORD God showed me: a basket of ripe fruit," the prophet Amos reports. And then sends his people the following message, "The LORD said to me, 'The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer'" (Amos 8:1–2).

Within two generations God's people go into captivity. Ten tribes are "lost." A remnant of Judah returns to Jerusalem. But the captors themselves are led captive in sequence: Assyria, Babylon, Persia. So even the most distant and mighty nation must bend to the LORD's will, and its civilization vanishes from the pages of recordable history.

*History's Focal Point*

In New Testament times the historical sense remains the same. When called upon to spell out the Christian view of history in simple terms, the apostle Paul unveils for his heathen audience the double point of history. All history, he explains, is encompassed in two people: Adam and Christ. Adam is the earthling, the created progenitor of mankind. "Sin entered into the world through [this] one man and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Rom 5:12).

Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God the Father, is the other man. He was the right man, the One appointed by God to give us life with God. In and through Christ God made mankind the focal point of his love. The glorious good news is that Jesus Christ is history's real focal point.

What does this mean? St. Paul gives the explanation: "For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! . . . how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:15, 17).

This Christian gospel was first preached in a world that had grown old by stages. The ancient empires of Egypt, Babylonia,

Persia, and Greece were gone from the scene. At Christ's time, Rome stood at the height of her power. Christ and his apostles lived within the context of those times. Life in Judea in Jesus' day reflects those times; the spread of the gospel in the apostolic age occurs within that age. In reading the New Testament, we need to gain a "cultural literacy" of the Roman world. Its language and culture are "dictionaries" of the times to help our textual understanding.

Such an isagogical preparation for reading the text is history's modest offering. It sets us into that particular day and that particular age and thereby enlivens every Bible study with real-life contexts. By using the tool of history, we are given the vital context within which we gain a greater understanding of the sense of history: *the Lord of history is history's LORD*.

That insight puts all history into focus. The mystery of history's Lord revealed on the pages of the Christian Scriptures is the sole foundation of our comfort, life, and salvation. In, with, and through Christ Jesus, our Lord, we learn to sing Easter's song: Celebrate life! (*L'chaim!*) And the celebration of life, in the final analysis, is what history is all about. For "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). That is the Christian Scriptures' unique message, set in the context of world history. **LOGOS**

## NOTES

1. Roger Eastman, ed., *The Ways of Religion: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 154.
2. Peter Brunner, "The Secret of History," in *Luther and the World of the Twentieth Century* (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1961), p. 16.
3. Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), p. 491.

4. Martin Franzmann, *The Word of the Lord Grows* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), p. 19.
5. E. D. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1987), p. 91.
6. Hirsch, p. 29 f.
7. Elert, p. 480 f.

# *Entrance into the Biblical World*

## *The First and Crucial Cross-Cultural Move*

DEAN O. WENTHE



In a day when there is considerable stress on the challenges that face the ordained ministry, you will be glad to hear the results of a recent study conducted by a group of Lutheran exegetes. It has now been shown that a positive correlation exists between the amount of Hebrew read daily and blood pressure levels. Those pastors who daily read Hebrew showed remarkably low blood pressures. (Those reading Greek daily were much lower than the average clergyman, but slightly above the Hebrew readers.) In addition, these pastors reported superior digestion and sounder sleep patterns to those who did not read Hebrew. And, of course, their parishioners were considerably more positive toward their sermons, not to mention the fact that their churches were also faster growing.

This study, as you may have surmised by this point, was intuitive, informal, and uncontrolled. This, of course, does not affect our confidence in its results. The reason for raising this topic of biblical languages afresh is the presence of well-intentioned, but nonetheless Philistine spirits among the faithful. More than one report has reached the campus computer that doubts exist concerning the benefits of the original biblical languages. It is suggested that the time and energy could be better and more efficiently spent on “how-to” courses. How could anyone, at least anyone who has been baptized, entertain such thoughts?

The thesis of this brief essay will be that these and even darker thoughts have filled the air, somewhat like a nasty virus, *because the primary and crucial cross-cultural move, that is, entrance into the biblical world*, is no longer, in some quarters, sufficiently appreciated. To put it another way, the logic and rationale for study of the biblical languages has depended upon a prior assumption, namely, that it was desirable, and even essential, to provide access to the original accents of the prophet and apostle. An understanding of those aorist passives and hiphils was viewed as essential to a proper understanding of the biblical text and hence for a right view of biblical truth.

To illustrate how seriously the Christian tradition has taken these matters, I cite two worthy voices from very different settings and very different perspectives: Chrysostom writes:

It is not in the interests of extravagant ambition that we trouble ourselves with such detailed exposition, but we hope through such painstaking interpretation to train you in the importance of not passing up even one slight word or syllable in the sacred Scriptures. For they are not ordinary utterances, but the expression of the Holy Spirit Himself, and for this reason it is possible to find great treasure even in a single syllable.<sup>1</sup>

And Ferdinand Hitzig, the renowned linguist and biblical scholar of nineteenth century Germany, used to begin his classes with the following comment: “Gentlemen, have you a Septuagint? If not, sell all you have, and buy a Septuagint.”<sup>2</sup> What both of these men understood, but what can no longer be taken for granted, is that the languages were crucial if one desired to understand the biblical text precisely and fully.

Moreover, the historical-grammatical method rightly positioned the biblical text in its original ancient Near-Eastern or Greco-Roman context. To put it pointedly, one of the greatest, most rewarding, and pivotal aspects of the pastor’s vocation is frequently to leave behind the arid and false assumptions of our modern period for the clear air and refreshing vistas of the biblical world.

When we spend time in the biblical world and in the infinite richness of its center, the gospel of Jesus Christ, then we can speak a fresh, faithful, and truly liberating word to ourselves and our flocks. Of course, the crowds are headed the other way; away from the biblical texts and the biblical world to other texts and other worlds.

Observers, from a believing Alexander Solzhenitsyn in his famous Harvard address to a secular pundit like the University of Chicago’s Allan Bloom, have noted the wholesale loss of biblical categories as well as classical thinking in our country. When more of our youth watch MTV than read great literature, and more adults are sedated by infinite entertainment, how can the biblical text be held up and the biblical truth expounded if not by the church and particularly by its trained pastors?<sup>3</sup>

Two books have recently chronicled how this larger cultural erosion quickly shapes theological education, namely, Edward Farley’s *The Fragility of Knowledge*<sup>4</sup> and David H. Kelsey’s *To Understand God Truly*.<sup>5</sup> Clinical and therapeutic models, managerial literature, social causes, and a variety of trends have virtu-

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ally replaced the languages and the Bible as the operative core of some seminary thinking and training. If a Lutheran voice is needed, it is striking that George Lindbeck, certainly no reactionary, comments concerning theological students who study ELCA's theological direction:

Now they learn from their fellow Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican, Disciples and other students that the ELCA is not much different from these other mainline denominations. It is swayed by the same current fashions and is not notably better rooted in the historic faith. . . . The ELCA, like other denominations, appears to be capitulating to the *Zeitgeist* and losing the struggle for confessional integrity for the foreseeable future.<sup>6</sup>

David Kelsey, a professor at Yale, describes how quickly these shifts shape theological education away from the biblical text and biblical truth:

The conventional view that a theological school is “theological” because it educates church leadership has been roundly attacked in the current conversation about theological *education*. . . . There are two reasons: The first is that it is disastrous to define theological schooling as the task of educating church leadership because *it distorts* and finally destroys theology. If what makes a theological school “theological” is that it educates persons to fill the roles comprising the profession of church leadership, then “theology” becomes a name for bodies of theory that are applied by religious specialists in the practice of church leadership. . . . “Theology” is now defined, not by reference to its ultimate subject (God), but by reference to socially defined roles.

Secondly, the “clerical paradigm” simply has not worked. When theological education is defined as preparation for filling the functions that make up the role of professional church leadership, graduates turn out to be incapable of nurturing and guiding congregations as worshipping communities, the health of whose common life depends on the quality of the theology that is done there. The graduates may in the short run have the relevant skills to help congregations organize themselves to engage in several practices that comprise their common life (religious education, social action, gathering and maintaining resources). . . . However, those skills tend to become outdated fairly quickly as cultural and social changes occur. More seriously, theological schooling defined and organized as preparation for filling a set of ministerial functions unavoidably simply omits to cultivate in future church leaders *the conceptual capacities* they need in order to understand and to engage in those functions as theological practices, *that is, as practices requiring critical self-reflection about the truth and Christian adequacy* of what is actually said and done in the congregations' current engagement.<sup>7</sup>

If we are tempted to think that more conservative communities have not been so adversely affected, there is reason not to be too simplistic or naive. David F. Wells, professor of historical and systematic theology at Gordon-Conwell—one of the great evangelical bastions—has recently written a book entitled *No Place for Truth*, subtitled “Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?”<sup>8</sup> His thesis is that evangelical pastors have abandoned their traditional role as ministers of the Word to become therapists and “managers” of small enterprises we call the church. Wells explores the wholesale disappearance of theology in many church quarters. Western culture as a whole, he argues, has been transformed by modernity, and evangelicals have simply gone with the flow.

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*One of the greatest, most rewarding, and pivotal aspects of the pastor's vocation is frequently to leave behind the arid and false assumptions of our modern period for the clear air and refreshing vistas of the biblical world.*

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Another clear warning sign is change in a historically central teaching, as has occurred in the last two decades at Fuller, at Trinity, and at Gordon-Conwell, on the question of the ordination of women. The momentum at all three is clearly with those forces that argue that the biblical texts on this topic are so compromised by the particular culture and by patriarchy, that the biblical truth cannot be asserted with clarity or lack of ambiguity. A fine book by Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halaka in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*, written from a critical but forthright perspective, points to the huge difficulties in reading the biblical texts as many of these scholars wish to do. He writes:

Schüssler Fiorenza's description of the “Jesus Movement” as a “Renewal Movement within Judaism” is inadequate. The idea of Jesus as ‘the woman identified man’ and of his followers as the ‘discipleship of equals’ is a romanticism in the massive patriarchalism of Jewish and Apostolic tradition.<sup>9</sup>

While put in less technical language, not a few voices from within Lutheranism have echoed this “romanticism,” which is a polite way to say that people are simply not doing their historical research cleanly. The world of church and family in the second temple and apostolic periods were, as Tomson writes, marked by a “massive patriarchalism.” To say that gender is insignificant and peripheral in the biblical understanding of vocation and station is simply not so. Biblically speaking, gender is at the center of who we are, and that by God's good creative gift and design—man and woman are both of inestimable value and worth for that reason—not because they are interchangeable in family and in church.

It has actually been suggested that we need to move beyond Paul to Jesus in these matters, as though we knew Jesus

better than Paul, or as though Paul would express that which was not in accord with his Lord. Enough about this point. It simply illustrates how subtly and yet substantially the cultural drift away from the biblical world can shape our assumptions, language, and ultimately, positions viewed as biblical, on this topic, as the Church of England has so recently shown us.

To move to a more positive note, however, there is, I would suggest, a real opportunity in this situation, precisely because the fundamental approaches are so different, especially for pastors who confess the biblical text and biblical truth.

Pastors, in accord with their ordination vows, bear a particularly clear calling at this point. In fact, Peter Leithart avers that before there is really a change in culture there is a change in the priesthood. His analysis, in reviewing Philip Rieff's article on Oscar Wilde, is striking:

A cultural revolution, then, not only involves a change in the symbolic of moral demands, but a change in priesthood: "A crisis in culture occurred whenever the old guides were struck dumb, or whenever laities began listening to new guides." For many centuries, Rieff notes, the sociological priesthood of Western culture was the literal priesthood of the Christian church, but by Wilde's time churchmen had defaulted in their capacity as authoritative cultural guides. They had fallen silent and other priesthoods began projecting their ideals onto the "laity." . . . What is most disturbing, however, is that the Church no longer functions as priesthood in this sociological sense even for Christians. Rieff has called attention to contemporary churchmen's abandoning all Christian dogma and practice that does not readily lend itself to therapeutic purposes.<sup>10</sup>

There is an opportunity *for us* in all of this. As our culture defines itself by other narratives, the gospel and the biblical truth will stand out as a different reading of the world, God, and humanity. Those who define themselves in Torah and in Christ will also stand out as those living by another narrative. All you have to do is behold how they are treated on the Donahue show!

My point then is this: we need to reassert and refocus the principle that the first and crucial cross-cultural move is an entrance into the biblical world. It is this move that will refresh and continually define the pastor in His calling. It is this move that will renew and restore the church to biblical thinking. How might this principle be clarified and deployed afresh for the nurture and strengthening of the church? Here much more than a matter of blood pressure is at stake! What is at stake is whether the church remains biblical.

I would like to advance three possible strategies for your consideration. Each seeks to assert that unless we continually enter the biblical world, and, thereby, develop the habit of thinking in biblical categories, our culture will provide us with other and alien categories to understand God and the world. Worse, it will frequently retain the form of biblical language, but do its actual business out of an entirely different world and framework of understanding.

How do we assert the need to enter the biblical world? First, I would propose that we reaffirm the inclusive view of the

Scriptures, namely, that sacred Scripture is true for all people and for all time.

In academia the deconstructionist movement asserts that no perspective or canon can be privileged beyond any other. This, of course, undermines not only all theological investigation but the very assumption that there is a true construal of reality. At the more popular level, it is as American as apple pie to think that if people are sincere, they'll be "OK." Sacred Scripture challenges such thinking by placing both the academic and the lay person before their Maker.

Second, the Scriptures offer premier models for a critique of culture. From Abel to St. John, the world of the biblical text and biblical truth have collided with other cultures. We must teach our parishioners to be consciously countercultural when our culture departs from biblical truth.

Third, I would like to propose that particularly in our culture, the Bible still presents non-negotiable items, that is, items the church cannot leave if it is to remain biblical, such as the following: the centrality of the crucified Christ, the centrality of his worship, the centrality of the sacraments, the centrality of community, the centrality of a patriarchy—understood biblically.

First, the inclusive view of the Scriptures: In Adam, all fell. In Christ, all have been redeemed. From Genesis to Revelation, the particularities entail the whole, hence the promise to Abram: in his particular seed all the nations will be blessed. It does not follow, of course, that the Bible requires one language, or particular art forms, or particular customs. Rather, in every culture, the one who defines himself and his world in accord with Scripture will be drawn, clearly and certainly, toward certain modalities and commonalities.

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### ***It is disastrous to define theological schooling as the task of educating church leadership.***

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The biblical witness here is overwhelming: the prologue of John's Gospel, the genealogy of Luke, the first chapter of Colossians, Revelation. These are but representative. Christians for two millennia have read the Scriptures as inclusive of all creation and all of history.

Along with this should come, I would suggest, a careful use of what the church used to call natural law. Luther could speak quite positively of natural law. For example, he writes, "Everyone must acknowledge what the natural law says is right and true. . . . This light lives and shines in all human reason" (WA 17 2, 102). Luther, when particularly disgusted with the Germans, writes: "Would to God that the majority of us were good, pious heathen, who kept the natural law, not to mention the Christian law!" (WA 18, 310, AE 46:29).<sup>11</sup> By pointing humanity to the "law" written in the human heart, we at least help our generation think more clearly. Rightly expounded, this affirmation of natural law can prepare the way for the proclamation of the gospel.

Second, what is insufficiently noted and exploited is that Scripture contains an internal critique—sustained and sharp—of cultures that are corrosive to biblical truth. A few examples will suffice. If we read the Torah as a record of the great Messianic promise, but also of a simultaneous critique of hostile cultures, the results are noteworthy: As early as Genesis 4, the Cainite clan's construal of reality is found entirely flawed. So Seth is given as seed in the place of Abel. At Genesis 6:1–7, God finds the whole of humanity lacking—their conceptual view is עָרָא—only evil—all the time. So a new culture and construal emerges from Noah—the one favored and righteous (v. 9).

Similarly the line of Shem is chosen over the lines of Ham and Japheth (Gn 9–11). This pattern, however, becomes explicit in the call of Abram. The LORD said to Abram, “leave your country,” “your people,” and “your brother's household and go to the land that I will show you” (Gn 12:1). One could scarcely conceive of a more complete break with one's familial and cultural setting.

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### *These texts are familiar—but have we fully entered their critique of culture?*

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Far more was at stake here than merely obeying a divine call—a very different world, physical and theological—awaited Abram. We read in Joshua 24:2–3:

Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Long ago your forefathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants.’”

A particularly noteworthy feature of that context is that Joshua, following the example of Moses in Deuteronomy, admonishes in the clearest language that the choice of culture entails religious commitments: “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt and serve the LORD” (Jos 24:14).

“Beyond the River” and “in Egypt” are shorthand for the great, ancient, and attractive cultures of Mesopotamia and Egypt. At the center of both were elaborate and convincing theological systems, supported by massive temples, by an articulate guild of priests, and by the state. It is surely easy to underestimate the allure and attraction that such cultures offered to the Israelites. Put another way, how different is the Torah view of God, the world, and mankind.

With the discoveries at Ebla, for instance, it is clear that Abram, who could muster but 318 trained men for Lot's rescue in Genesis 14, would have appeared like just another of the thousands of clan heads who traversed the ancient trade routes. To assert that the future of the whole cosmos depended upon someone in his loins rather than from the house of Pharaoh was quite a claim,

given the cultural surroundings. Or, think how remarkable is the claim of the Torah that the true God has chosen to place his glory in a portable shrine in the midst of a fugitive people, walking through the desert. Yet, from the perspective of Hosea and of Jeremiah, these were the golden days for Israel, when she truly defined herself by Yahweh's call and election. Along these lines, one can read the history of Israel from the period of the Judges to the fall of Jerusalem as a great contest between the “Yahweh only” party—almost always a minority numerically—and the syncretistic “Yahweh and . . .” party. The reform of Josiah in 622 B.C. illumines just how far such syncretistic thinking had penetrated:

The king ordered Hilkiah . . . to remove from the temple of the LORD, all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts. . . . Furthermore, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem. (2 Kgs 23:4, 24).

These texts are familiar—but have we fully entered their critique of culture? They invite us to be much more critical in our thinking and much more analytic when we co-opt current trends in the church.

Third, I would like to suggest that we are in a strong position to define certain non-negotiables, not only because the Scriptures are clear and inclusive in their descriptions, but also because Christians for two thousand years have existed in many cultures without losing their biblical identity. What sorts of things are non-negotiable? What must we hold to over against our culture and context, if necessary? The following suggestions, with the briefest support, are offered for your consideration.

1. *The Centrality of the Crucified Christ, which is to say, the biblically defined Christ.* It will simply not do to fashion one's Christology according to Zig Ziegler and motivational thinking, or along the lines of the “power of positive thinking,” or in the categories of modern therapeutic models. One can change a church into a “user friendly” religiosity that imitates the latest of Disney World, but such a construal will project the cultural Christology of our day rather than the biblical Christology. To pick but one popular example, for not a few Americans Christ is presented as a sort of divine fireman or insurance salesman. He is the one, according to this understanding of the faith, who gets us to heaven. Heaven within this framework is the real end and purpose of the faith. At its worst this reading of the biblical witness paganizes the very heart of the Scriptures. A place like Valhalla is not what the Scriptures are recommending to us. No, the Scriptures are recommending Christ. As Jesus himself puts it: “I go to prepare a place for you that where I am you may be also.” The triune God is what makes heaven great, not its mild temperatures in comparison with Sheol. Similarly, the worst curse of hell is the absence of God.

2. *The Centrality of Worship.* This leads us naturally into a second central component of the biblical world: worship. Our culture, in many and various ways, peripheralizes worship. According to it, the real radioactive part of spirituality goes on in private or in the conventicle.

Throughout the Scriptures, God's people are called to worship. The question is not: "Do you believe in God?" the question with which our culture leads. Rather, the question is: "Which God do you worship?" The driving purpose of the Exodus, as alluded to before, was to free God's people for worship. Note how central worship is to God's call of Israel: following right upon the Exodus comes the detailed description of the tabernacle (Ex 25–40), and the elaborate stipulations on worship and provision for the priests (Lv 1–10).

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***Biblical anthropology is very distant from that which is dominating the thinking in most corners of Western culture.***

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Biblically speaking, already on this earth God is with us (the Word became flesh and dwelt among us), and therefore, there is a foretaste of the feast to come. Worship, defined biblically, brings us the saving gospel and sacraments. God and eternity are already present in the absolution of sins for the sake of Christ.

**3. *The Centrality of the Sacraments.*** We have noted the centrality of worship in the Old Testament. Similarly, the prominence of the Baptism of Jesus, the passion narratives, the Eucharist: these, along with the practice of the apostolic church, show continuity with the Old Testament's unity of word and sacrament. The characterization of the sacraments in much of Western culture as outward, mechanical, and formal, while the spoken gospel brings that inner, authentic, and genuine spirituality: this antithesis is totally non-biblical.

**4. *The Centrality of Community.*** The Scriptures configure humanity not as solitary atoms, but as those who, by the created order of God, are born into family and church. The autonomous self—so ubiquitous in modern thinking—becomes even more resistant to community in matters religious. That I should have to explain my idiosyncratic reading of the Scriptures is unthinkable! That I should be required to subscribe to the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds—how legalistic! As one pastor who most frequently omits the creed from his Sunday worship told me not so long ago, the creeds are a real "downer." I urged him to reread his ordination vows, and he urged an unpleasant journey for me to a place without Christ and with very high temperatures. The frequent abandonment, in practice, of a church's policy on admission to Holy Communion, along with other things, bespeaks a loss of ecclesiology.

**5. *The Centrality of Gender in the Biblical Description of Humanity.*** We have already touched on this point, but biblical anthropology is very distant from that which is dominating the thinking in most corners of Western culture. Perhaps what is at issue here has been best summarized by John Piper and Wayne Grudem in the forward to the book *Recovering Biblical Manhood*

and *Womanhood* (a book to which my eminently biblical colleague Dr. Weinrich has contributed) when they write the following:

A controversy of major proportions has spread through the church. It began over twenty years ago in society at large. Since then an avalanche of feminist literature has argued that there need be no difference between men's and women's roles—indeed, that to support gender-based role differences is unjust discrimination. Within evangelical Christianity, the counterpart to this movement has been the increasing tendency to oppose any unique leadership role for men in the family and in the church. "Manhood" and "womanhood" as such are now often seen as irrelevant factors in determining fitness for leadership.<sup>12</sup>

The response that they envision strikes me as the biblical one. They continue:

We want to help Christians recover a noble vision of manhood and womanhood as God created them to be. . . . Our vision is not entirely the same as "a traditional view." We affirm that the evangelical feminist movement has pointed out many selfish and hurtful practices that have previously gone unquestioned. But we hope that this new vision—a vision of Biblical "complementarity"—will both correct the previous mistakes and avoid the opposite mistakes that come from the feminist blurring of God-given sexual distinctions.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, it is very striking that both Israel and the apostolic church lived in an environment where women, serving as priestesses, were prominent in the popular worship of various deities. The fact that both Israel and the church were counter-cultural, not placing women in the pulpit and before the altar, is most significant! It is also noteworthy that the pantheons of the surrounding cultures contained both male and female deities. If one removes the biblical texts from the biblical world, such a fact is missed, and I would contend the point and clarity of the biblical injunctions blurred. In a strange way, a certain form of biblicistic exegesis actually serves the ends of the evangelical feminists.

## ENTRANCE INTO THE BIBLICAL WORLD

My summary suggestion is that much is at stake in how we do our biblical study. Theological training and our whole understanding of the theological task is quickly affected. Particularly for the pastor in this dark epoch, it is a delight and a daily vocation to enter the biblical world afresh—not simply with his mind, but with his heart and soul as well, and with his life normed and formed by that world. Thus he can truly be a pastor in the care of his flock, a priest at the altar, and a herald of the good news to all. If he is to do it cleanly and profitably, the inclusive vision of the Scriptures, the critique of corrosive, cultural influences, and the confession of the unchanging biblical truth concerning God and mankind will surely be necessary. Then biblical text and *biblical truth* will be, as God ordained, joined in indissoluble union for all places and for all times. LOGIA

## NOTES

1. Migne, PG, LIII, col 119.
2. Cited in F. Danker, *Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 63.
3. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Edward E. Ericson, Jr., *Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1993).
4. Edward Farley, *The Fragility of Knowledge* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).
5. David Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).
6. George Lindbeck, "The Meaning of Satis Est, or . . . tilting in the Ecumenical Wars," *Lutheran Forum* 26, no. 4 (November 1992), p. 19.
7. Kelsey, pp. 162–163.
8. David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993).
9. Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halaka in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 132, n. 196.
10. Peter Leithart, "The Priests of Culture," *First Things*, vol. 27 (November 1992), pp. 11–12.
11. Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), p. 27.
12. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991), p. xiii.
13. Piper and Grudem, p. xiv.



It's the same awful dream night after night . . . Martin Luther, William F. Buckley, and Pope Leo X debating "resolved: Richard John Neuhaus and Calvin Trillin are actually the same man." And / have the position against!

# The Authority of Scripture

## Luther's Approach to Allegory in Galatians

TIMOTHY H. MASCHKE



Luther's biblical scholarship and respect for scriptural authority have long been recognized and cherished among Lutheran theologians. As a Renaissance man, Luther relished the opportunities to return *ad fontes* (to the sources) of the authoritative biblical texts in the original Hebrew and Greek. His break with the Roman Catholic Church's tradition-bound interpretations provided refreshing and liberating insights from Scripture's author himself.

Luther had a high regard for Scripture as the ultimate authority for his teaching and life. Yet one of the interesting and often misunderstood aspects of Luther's biblical hermeneutics is his understanding and use of allegory. Because allegory had become an abused method that led people away from the clear words of Scripture, Luther spoke some harsh words against it. Yet Luther found himself in a quandary when he did his own exegetical studies and lecturing on the epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians, for there in the very text of Scripture is allegory. It is in the context of these lectures, covering a period of almost twenty years of Luther's life, that we can see clearly Luther's complete, careful, and profoundly humble respect for Scripture's authority.

### ANTI-ALLEGORY RHETORIC REVIEWED

Luther scholarship in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has argued that Luther gave up the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture for a purely literal approach. This view held sway for much of this century largely as a result of Gerhard Ebeling's influential and monumental study.<sup>1</sup> In his analysis, based upon an evolutionary view of Luther's theological development, Ebeling argued that Luther completely abandoned his medieval monastic hermeneutics for a radically reformed literalism.

Many Luther scholars have accepted this point of view at the end of this century.<sup>2</sup> While some discussion occurs among Luther specialists, little has actually been done to substantiate or refute his thesis since Ebeling's "definitive" conclusions were submitted. Some recent studies in Luther refer casually to Luther's continuing use of allegory, but nothing has been done to show that in fact Luther retained a biblical understanding of allegory, wholly proper to the text of Scripture, and only modified the misdirected medieval hermeneutic he inherited.<sup>3</sup>

In his 1965 work on Luther's theology, Ebeling restated his astonishment that, as Luther began to study the Bible, he expressly affirmed the traditional fourfold meaning of Scripture. Yet Ebeling is quick to explain that this was only a preliminary step by Luther, or a transitional stage towards a more correct, Reformation, and literal understanding.<sup>4</sup> Luther's continuing use of allegory after his "Reformation breakthrough" is thereby denied, and Luther's respect for Scripture as his ultimate authority is devalued for biblical studies.

A study of Luther's Galatians lectures shows that Luther used not only the concept of allegory but the practice of allegoresis (interpreting through allegory) between 1516 and 1538. Even Ebeling's research supports this argument against his own thesis that Luther abandoned allegory at an early date.<sup>5</sup> Further study in Luther's other commentaries only confirms the view that indeed Luther had rejected the medieval tradition of allegory, but retained the biblical, and especially the Pauline, understanding of the term because it was in Scripture, his ultimate authority.<sup>6</sup>

The argument that Luther gave up allegory holds true only when the concept of allegory is separated from its authoritative biblical use. From a nineteenth century liberal perspective that equated allegory with fiction, Ebeling is correct in showing that Luther rejected a fictional view of Scripture.<sup>7</sup> Such a view is similar to modern and post-modern approaches to the Bible that view many sections of Scripture as "myth."<sup>8</sup>

### ALLEGORY IN TRANSITION

While allegory was used from earliest times among Christians, various understandings of this figure of speech exist. Origen, often identified as the father of Christian allegorical interpretation,<sup>9</sup> used allegory to reveal hidden meanings in every text, especially as he sought to discover Christ in the Old Testament.<sup>10</sup> The deepest meaning, allegory, was for the spiritually elite, he suggested. This emphasis led to a distorted use of allegory by later proponents of biblical hermeneutics, as Luther repeatedly recognized.<sup>11</sup>

Most common among biblical interpreters during the following century, the time of Jerome and Augustine, was a search for a fourfold sense of Scripture. This fourfold sense was based upon St. Paul's distinction between letter and spirit in 2 Corinthians. Augustine tried to clarify this distinction by introducing levels of meaning for a biblical text. Subsequent biblical scholarship followed his arguments, claiming that Scripture provided not only a grammati-

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cally understandable message (the literal), but a message for one's faith (the allegorical), for the believer's present life (the tropological or moral), and also of hope toward which the Christian church was moving (the anagogical).<sup>12</sup> Most Bible scholars in the Middle Ages followed this pattern of four senses set by Origen, Jerome, and Augustine. They recognized a spiritual quality in Scripture and sought to plumb the depths of the biblical text for its gospel pearls.

Aberrations certainly and unfortunately resulted when fervor for the spiritual sense exceeded ability and sensibility. During these centuries, the *quadriga* (the fourfold approach) not only held sway, but at times became highly rigid and mechanical. The pursuit of the multiple senses of Scripture, especially its hidden meanings, created a sense of uncertainty among Bible scholars and caused a rift between the use of Scripture and the church's interpretation.

The literal text was not abandoned by all medieval biblical scholars. The multiple senses were viewed as spiritual applications of the literal text according to Bonaventure<sup>13</sup> or as actual meanings in the literal text according to Nicholas of Lyra.<sup>14</sup> Medieval biblical scholarship so strongly emphasized the supernatural, spiritual dimension of a biblical text that too frequently the literal text was ignored or only previewed cursorily.<sup>15</sup> The excruciatingly distracting distortions that accumulated among these Bible interpreters are too numerous for us to mention in this brief article.

Misuse of a process or method, however, does not mean that that process or method should be abandoned, as the medieval axiom reminds us: *abusus non tollit usum* (abuse does not abolish the use). Luther recognized this truth in several of his renovation measures and followed a similar approach to the use of allegory in his biblical studies.<sup>16</sup> That the quadrigic view of Scripture was not always carried out carefully or consistently by others was not the issue for Luther. Rather his desire was to understand and use the biblical approach to the Scripture itself so that he could hear God speak clearly, personally, and authoritatively.<sup>17</sup>

In his approach to Scripture as his ultimate authority, Luther recognized the magnificent richness of God's Word. This richness manifested itself when Scripture was read with an eye toward the gospel and its spiritually vital application to contemporary life. The spiritual use of Scripture, that is, its Christocentric gospel content, was clearly recognized and relished as Luther followed his medieval Bible teachers, who themselves followed the monastic pattern of *lectio divina* (devotional reading) and read the Word for their spiritual nurturing.<sup>18</sup>

#### LUTHER'S MONASTIC TRAINING IN ALLEGORY

As a tool for Christian nurture and as a resource of spiritual sustenance, Scripture was part of Luther's experience in and out of the monastery, before the classroom, and in the pulpit. Just as monasteries and pulpits had been used and abused, Luther recognized that allegory had been misused when separated from the authoritative biblical text. Yet he also saw that allegory was a method employed by the biblical authors themselves. Thus he could neither completely accept it as a fitting approach to Scripture nor categorically reject it out of hand.

Luther boldly argued that all mechanical approaches to Bible study, especially as they forced mandatory and distinct senses upon the text, reverted back to a legalistic literalism, a focus on the words, without discovering the Spirit-directed

gospel meanings or applications.<sup>19</sup> Following a monastic and Augustinian tradition back to Paul, Luther discovered once again the spiritual application of a text, the gospel as the true, central, and authoritative message.

#### LUTHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF ALLEGORY

That Luther utilized allegory in his first lectures on Psalms is demonstrated by a superficial review of his lectures.<sup>20</sup> That he rejected a full-blown mechanical quadrigic interpretation in his later commentaries and lectures is also self-evident. What he rejected about allegory and what he retained are not always clear. At least two facts can be pointed out here.

First, allegory was used by most scholars of the Middle Ages as a means of underscoring doctrinal content. The distich so often repeated by monks and cited by Nicholas of Lyra said this in so many words: "Littera gesta docet; quid credas allegoria; Moralis quid agas; quo tendas anagogia."<sup>21</sup> That there was a deeper sense of application for the Scriptures was not questioned by Luther. Rather, Luther desired to hear the law and the gospel clearly applied. Following his monastic order's namesake, Augustine, Luther was introduced to the spiritual dimension of Scripture, which freed him from his scholastic, mechanistic teachers. He had experienced the dire dread created by the law, that pedagogue which functioned only for a time, and rejoiced in a gospel that freed him from his sins as well as his doubts and despair.<sup>22</sup> Instead of seeking four distinct meanings, Augustine enabled Luther to seek only the basic two levels of meaning: the historical-grammatical text and the spiritual-personal application, or the human side and the divine side of Scripture.<sup>23</sup>

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### *Allegory was used by most scholars of the Middle Ages as a means of underscoring doctrinal content.*

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Luther began to understand the need for an authoritative historical-grammatical reading of the biblical text and made a break with the mechanical use of the *quadriga*. Although allegory was theoretically always under the direct interpretation of the church through the analogy of faith, that particular approach had not been sufficiently practiced by many in the Middle Ages. During the time that Luther grew away from the church's authority, he also grew away from the use of allegory as a method merely to support biblical doctrine. He discovered that such a mechanical attempt to interpret every text allegorically had confounded the doctrine and made the Bible a closed book, open only to those experts who had understood the doctrines of the church and then could, through a process of eisegesis, read the doctrines back into the texts.

What Luther recovered from his reading of Augustine, and more importantly from Paul, was that Scripture not only revealed the basic literal information, but that there was an authoritative spiritual sense that every Christian needed to apply to his own life, the law and the gospel.<sup>24</sup>

Second, allegory had been used by the church to bridge the recognized gap between contemporary life and the past historical narrative. Allegory was seen as making the Scriptures relevant to contemporary Christians. In contrast, Luther understood that the literal sense itself was able to create contemporaneity by transcending human historical time and speaking a relevant word to any time and at any place. The authoritative text of Scripture brought Christ himself into the presence of the reader.<sup>25</sup> The good news, spoken of old, sounded continually for Luther and his contemporaries whenever the gospel word was read and proclaimed in their own hearing with faith.

Such a contemporary and authoritative word had relevance beyond a mechanical literalism. As Luther studied and became saturated in the biblical and especially the Pauline texts, he rediscovered the authoritative word, which would be a model for his hermeneutics. Luther returned to a Pauline concept of allegory as a faith illustration.

Allegory was not merely a tool to “find Christ” in the text of the Old Testament, although that was possible from Luther’s gospel perspective.<sup>26</sup> Whenever Luther saw Paul or Christ using allegory, he recognized that it was only another way of saying or illustrating the same thing by depicting it verbally. This is particularly clear in the Galatians commentaries, which we shall now briefly survey.

### *The Galatians Lectures and Commentaries*

The one instance in Scripture of the term “allegory” (Gal 4:24) is the most logical starting point for approaching Luther’s biblical scholarship. An investigation into Luther’s multiple works with Galatians—at least six can be distinguished—especially as he made comments on Galatians 4:24, serves well as the primary focus to answer the question of Luther’s understanding and use of allegory. From an investigation into these works several conclusions can be drawn.<sup>27</sup>

Three early works consist of his original lectures from October 27, 1516, to March 13, 1517; the resulting commentary released in September of 1519; an abridged version of 1523; and a German translation in 1525. Luther’s second series on this beloved epistle was begun on July 3, 1531, and concluded in December of that year. This later lecture series served as the basis for a commentary on Galatians in 1535, from which a slightly expanded version in 1538 became known as Luther’s Galatians Commentary.

### *The Early Work (1516–25)*

Allegory, for obvious historical reasons, played a more prominent place in the earliest works on Galatians by Luther. Both as an object of concern as well as a subject of comment, allegory and the medieval *quadriga* were frequently cited.<sup>28</sup> Allegory as *alieniloquium* (“other speaking”) is affirmed in these early works; even the German translation by Vincent Heydnecker refers to allegory as “something covered or hidden.”<sup>29</sup> References to the *quadriga*, the fourfold method of interpretation, are made as a matter of course both in the lectures and in the commentaries.

Yet Luther underscored and affirmed the historical reality of the allegorical material; for example, Luther is quick to state that the allegorical use of the Hagar and Sarah accounts from Genesis does not deny their being true, factual, and historical charac-

ters.<sup>30</sup> This accentuates Luther’s misgivings of those exegetes who saw in allegory only a fictive account that could be played with indiscriminately. In the 1519 commentary he called that approach to allegory “a game.”<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the historical reality did not provide a license to read Scripture merely for its historical or narrative content. There was more intended in the biblical text than an empty, legalistic letter.

Luther repeated Augustine’s distinction between letter and spirit and affirmed that the letter denoted a biblical interpretation that lacked the grace and love of God. Spirit, on the other hand, referred to the grace-filled and life-giving message of forgiveness and salvation in Christ Jesus; it was a word of God’s activity for the human condition.<sup>32</sup> When reading a text, it was not the task of an interpreter merely to read the literal text and expound it, but to find the gospel, the good news of salvation for lost and condemned sinners.

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## *Allegory was not merely a tool to “find Christ” in the text of the Old Testament.*

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Allegory had to relate to grace and justification if it were to provide a proper understanding of a text. Or as Luther was wont to say in his later Galatians lectures, “allegories are meant to contain Christ.”<sup>33</sup> Thus the authority of Scripture lay in the Christocentric content that could be discovered only in the literal text.

The literal text was to serve as the authoritative basis for all doctrinal arguments. Allegory was never to be a principal tool for biblical interpretation. This also was a feature and methodological presupposition of Luther’s medieval tradition from the Victorines, Thomas Aquinas, and even Lyra.<sup>34</sup>

Allegory was to teach doctrines, not serve as a basis for making or establishing doctrinal formulations. This subtle yet vital distinction shaped Luther’s understanding and application of allegory. Allegory was an ornament, an illustration, a biblical allusion, which was used to apply a text to contemporary situations. For example, in the early commentaries Luther saw the illustration used by Paul in Galatians of sowing and reaping and could apply it to Christian sanctification.<sup>35</sup>

Such illustrations were designed specifically for Christians, that is, specifically for believers who had a grasp of the spiritual dimension of life and had faith instilled in them. These Galatian Christians, Luther acknowledged, were weak. As weak believers, they needed to be entertained in order to receive the edifying message of the gospel. Allegory served in that capacity adequately.<sup>36</sup>

Luther did criticize exaggerated and mechanical uses of the *quadriga*. He said that the practice of seeking four specific and distinct senses was not Pauline, scriptural, patristic, or even grammatical. He concluded that, because there was not a strong precedent in Scripture for its use, such a fourfold requirement should not be demanded as theologically necessary.<sup>37</sup> Allegory was particularly harmful when it was viewed as being better or higher than the literal, the grammatical-historical sense.

His criticism of the *quadriga* extended to the approach he saw as derived from Origen through Jerome. This was the mechanical approach of interpreting almost all biblical narratives as having an allegorical meaning. Yet in his criticisms Luther admitted that he felt Origen and especially Jerome were trying to find the spiritual sense in a text, and that was proper.<sup>38</sup>

In spite of these reservations, Luther encouraged his students and readers to try to understand allegory for two important reasons. First of all, allegory provided one way to see the spiritual dimension of a text. It opened the reader to see beyond the account to the gospel truths that God revealed.<sup>39</sup> Second, and more important for Luther, allegory opened up Paul's own hermeneutics so that his selection of specific texts, such as Isaiah 54 in Galatians 4:27, could be understood in its gospel fullness.<sup>40</sup>

### THE LATER WORK (1531–1538)

Luther's use of allegory in these later lectures and commentaries provides clearer indications of this understanding of allegory as illustrative applications of a biblical text and Luther's own humility before the authoritative text of Scripture. Biblical precedent is more ardently observed in these years. Luther identified allegory in Paul's use in Galatians of such terms or concepts as *testamentum*, pedagogue, "being in labor," the church's function of giving birth to children of faith, and sowing and reaping.<sup>41</sup> This biblical and Pauline propensity for allegory caused Luther to identify Paul as the master craftsman (*optimus artifex*) of allegory.<sup>42</sup>

Once again, Luther recognized allegory as illustrative material, supplementary to the main argument or theological point being made by Paul. Luther says that Paul used allegory as a picture in order to appeal to the emotions of the Galatians. These "bright and catchy" illustrations are winsome elements that served as aural pictures, appealing to the ears, just as visual pictures appeal to the eyes.<sup>43</sup>

Clarification rather than the establishment of doctrine is the purpose of allegory, Luther repeatedly underscores as he sees Paul's use of allegories. Just as ornamentation on a house or clothing does not make a home or item of clothing, so allegory must not be seen as proving anything or providing anything novel. Allegories were ornaments of argumentation; they clarify the main point that had already been established on the basis of the historical-grammatical text. To remove an allegory from such a context is to do a disservice to allegory and the author's intent.<sup>44</sup>

The artistic illuminations of allegory were designed to help the simple folk, the weaker Christians, understand biblical teachings, as Luther came to understand. Luther's emphasis upon the common Christian is stronger in these later years. His own pastoral responsibilities showed him the necessity as well as the benefits in utilizing allegory according to Paul's example. He recognized that allegories point the reader or hearer to the gospel, the powerfully free gift of salvation in Christ Jesus. That was what Paul did, and that was what Luther wanted to continue to do as he used this form of accommodation to human culture and experience.<sup>45</sup>

The Augustinian letter-spirit distinction is not emphasized specifically by Luther in these later works; the law-gospel motif remains. The allegory of Hagar and Sarah was one tool used by Paul to help the Galatian hearers, as well as Luther's contempo-

raries, understand the distinction between law and gospel, old and new testaments, legalism and faith, self-righteous works and Christ's gracious work. The content of allegory must always serve the spiritual purpose of Scripture itself, revealing Christ and strengthening faith in his saving acts. Luther could not and would not give up such a beneficial tool.<sup>46</sup>

Warnings against an abusive use of allegory also persist in these commentaries. All allegory was demonic and dangerous, he said, if it led away from the gospel, from faith, from justification by grace. Luther continued to speak against the mechanical use of allegory and the whole *quadrigic* approach to biblical interpretation. To require an interpreter to set forth an obligatory fourfold interpretation created a distorted view of the biblical text and led many Christian Bible readers away from the clear truth of the gospel. This Luther would not tolerate from his students or from his pastoral peers.<sup>47</sup>

From his own experience and practice, Luther illustrated that the logic of allegory was not always clear or humanly logical. He discloses some of his own misunderstandings and misuse of allegory. In discussing the Hagar and Sarah allegory, Luther pointed out that he would have followed what appeared to be a logical pattern set by Paul: Hagar is equated with Mt. Sinai, therefore Sarah should be equated with Mt. Zion. Paul does not do this, observes Luther in his comments. Rather, Hagar is also identified with Jerusalem and Sarah is equated with the "heavenly Jerusalem." Paul's allegorical logic is peculiar. Similarly, Luther notes that the concept "heavenly Jerusalem," clearly an anagogic sense if one follows the *quadriga*, is not Paul's intended meaning in this passage. Luther explained that Paul equated the "heavenly Jerusalem" with the present church, all true believers who were united by faith in Christ. This discussion of Paul's allegory shows Luther's increasing recognition of the Pauline understanding and use of allegory as distinct from its mechanical applicability.<sup>48</sup>

In these later comments, Luther is not as critical of the *quadriga's* non-scriptural, non-patristic, and non-grammatical precedent. In fact, Luther seems to return to a deeper sense of appreciation for Paul's use of allegory in his later study of Galatians, especially as he recognized and rejoiced in its authoritative gospel content.

### LUTHER'S USE AND APPRECIATION OF ALLEGORY

What is most important in our look at Luther is that he remained humble before the authoritative Scriptures. In spite of concerns and distortions that had occurred in the use and abuse of allegory, Luther retained the Pauline-based spiritual (Augustinian) approach to the Scriptures, while ridding it of the mechanical "literalism" with which he found it bound. What was central for Luther was not the mechanical (*quadrigic*) methodology of determining the literal meaning, then the doctrinal content of allegory, to be followed by the moralizing with the topological sense, and the hope-inspiring or imparting anagogical meaning, but Luther understood that the true spiritual food of Scripture was only in the gospel.

Allegorical examples were edifying, as Gregory the Great had insisted,<sup>49</sup> but Luther wanted his students, readers, and hearers to know the love of God in Christ. The faith examples were not mere *exempla*, "clearings in the woods," but were pow-

erful illustrations to strengthen the weak in faith. Thus only the faithful could receive these examples; to the “infidel” nothing could be proven with allegory.<sup>50</sup>

For Luther, allegory was the faith-oriented, Christ-centered, and gospel-filled application of the literal biblical text. Allegory was not a fictional digression or even a tangential example that might merely clutter a text. Rather, it was a faith-supporting illustration that weak believers could appreciate, appropriate, and experience as God’s good news to them through Christ.

Did Luther change? That is too simple a question to answer simply. Certainly there is evidence that Luther’s hermeneutics were modified over the years that he studied and taught as a Doctor of Sacred Scripture. But the nature of that change is important to note. It was a change toward the earlier medieval understanding of the spiritual nature of Scripture, toward an Augustinian understanding of spirit and letter, toward a scriptural model (Pauline) for allegorical applications, and toward an authoritative text in which the Babe of Bethlehem, the Savior of the world, continued to come to his redeemed.

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**Clarification rather than the establishment of doctrine is the purpose of allegory.**

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Did Luther give up allegory? The answer is a resounding, “No! He could not.” The Scriptures alone were authoritative. Luther understood the Scriptures as God’s inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word. The words, penned by men, were none other than the very word of God. The Holy Spirit caused these Scriptures to be written. The same Spirit used these words to impart spiritual strength and blessings. The Spirit laid the Christ-Child into the very pages of the text. Luther saw and heard Christ throughout the Scriptures. The Father had spoken and promised his love embodied. Jesus came as that incarnate Son of God to communicate most clearly the truth of God’s forgiving and life-giving love. The Scriptures revealed that love of the Father through the life of Christ by the power of the Spirit. Luther could not give up such a storehouse of spiritual vitality by locking it up with a new literalism.

In Martin Luther we see a humble Christian servant and teacher standing before and under the authoritative word of Scripture. Because St. Paul utilized allegory, it could not be forbidden. Yet Luther came to understand Paul’s use of allegory in a new light as he studied Paul himself. Paul did not create haphazardly any image that he deemed necessary to make his point. The allegories of Paul were always pointing in some way to Christ and the truth of the gospel. Pauline allegories were useful for the weak so that they could enjoy and appreciate the truth revealed in Scripture, especially the gospel of full and free forgiveness. Luther re-emphasized the necessity of cautiously using allegory correctly and biblically as an illustrative resource for the Christian faith and life. LOGIA

## NOTES

1. Gerhard Ebeling, *Evangelische Evangelienauslegung: Eine Untersuchung zu Luthers Hermeneutik*, 3d ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1991). The original edition was published in 1942 after Ebeling had submitted his doctoral dissertation to the theological faculty of the University of Zurich in 1938.

2. Although he takes a strong position against allegory, Siebert W. Becker, *The Foolishness of God: The Place of Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1982), pp. 82 and 153, does not follow Ebeling completely. His ambivalence is evident when he wrote, “It is well known that when Luther began his exegetical lectures at Wittenberg, he quickly turned away from the allegorical method, by which he said that Origen and Jerome had made fools of themselves. Finally he abandoned the method *almost entirely*. . . . It is well known that Luther gradually drifted away from the allegorical method of Biblical interpretation until, in the end, he *almost completely* abandoned and rejected it” (emphasis added). With such cautious qualification, Becker honestly and correctly admits to Luther’s continuing albeit limited usage of allegory with the words “almost entirely” and “almost completely.”

3. See Scott Hendrix, “Luther Against the Background of the History of Biblical Interpretation,” *Interpretation* 37, no. 3 (July 1983), pp. 229–239; Kenneth Hagen, *Luther’s Approach to Scripture as Seen in His Commentaries on Galatians 1519–1538* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1993); and Robert Kolb, “The Influence of Luther’s Galatians Commentary of 1535 on Later Sixteenth-Century Lutheran Commentaries on Galatians,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 84 (1993), in process.

4. Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: Einführung in sein Denken* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1964), pp. 111 and 116–117: “Erstaunlicherweise steht am Anfang von Luthers Umgang mit der Heiligen Schrift die ausdrückliche Bejahung dieses traditionellen vierfachen Schriftsinns. In gewisser Weise wurde ihm dieser sogar dienlich auf dem Wege zum reformatorischen Schriftverständnis. . . . Für Luther selbst war sie ein Durchgangsstadium, aber eine erste Wegstrecke, in der sich, trotz aller notwendigen Korrekturen, das Kommende anmeldet.” [English translation: *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 102 and 107.]

5. Ebeling, *Evangelische Evangelienauslegung*, pp. 49–84, speaks of Luther’s “abandonment” (*Preisgabe*) of allegory as early as 1517; yet, p. 355, he continues to show evidence of allegorical interpretations until the very last years of Luther’s life.

6. While this is beyond the purview of this study, my cursory reading of Luther’s later commentaries on Deuteronomy and Genesis confirms the fact that allegory is unquestionably used by Luther. His sermons on Exodus, which he preached between 1524 and 1527, underscore this practice.

7. Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1974), p. 55, notes that “Despite the influence of Pietism, the fate of ‘spiritual’ reading and thus of double meaning in the interpretation of Scripture in the later eighteenth century was finally as dim as that of the principle of interpretation through tradition, evaporating the remnants of whatever mystical-allegorical reading on the part of Protestants had survived the seven-

teenth century. The eighteenth century was the period of the direct reading of the 'plain' text, the one common ground among all the differing schools."

He indicates that it was Kant alone who brought this separation about for the sake of a purely moral interpretation. "Others (actually, Kant seems to have been the only important figure in the late eighteenth century) detached the allegorically-shaped subject matter wholly from the author's intention, and also from any endeavor to understand the thought forms of his day, and from all inquiry into the relation of possible occurrences to the allegorical narrative. For Kant the meaning of the biblical narratives was strictly a matter of understanding the ideas they represent in story form. Any historiographical considerations are strictly irrelevant to the interpretation of the subject matter, which is the foundation and advancement of a pure moral disposition in the inner man and its connection with the ideal realm of ends" (p. 262).

8. See the comparable argument by Patsy A. Leppien and J. Kincaid Smith in *What's Going on Among the Lutherans?* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992), pp. 65–69.

9. R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (London: SCM, 1959), shows that Origen was following the accepted custom of his day. Greek philosophy with its allegorical approach was popular in Alexandria during the third century A.D. Palestinian Jewish allegory also had some influence on the Alexandrians. Origen tried to retain Christian substance while utilizing pagan style.

10. Further studies need to be done on Origen's sermons as reflected in Rufinus' translations (see *Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine, The Fathers of the Church series, [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1982] for an introduction and English translations of the Latin texts by Rufinus Tyrannius). In those sermons of Origen that are extant, the principles set forth in *De principiis* are not followed mechanically or rigidly. Rather, we see Origen seeking the spiritual senses in a way that Luther might have found concordant with his own purposes and experiences. Several themes noted by Henri Crouzel, *Origène*, in his chapter "L'interprétation de l'Écriture," are consistent with Luther's own emphasis upon the incarnate Word, "finding Christ" in the Old Testament, the necessity of the Holy Spirit for the interpreter, and a Pauline model.

11. In the Galatians commentaries Luther condemns the views of Origen that he had learned through reading Jerome.

12. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine (De doctrina christiana III. x. 14–16*; trans. J. F. Shaw, The Great Books series (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1955), pp. 661–2; *The Usefulness of Belief (De utilitate credenti iii. 5–8*; English translation in *Augustine: Earlier Works*, trans. John H. S. Burleigh, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), pp. 294–297).

For our contemporary understanding, these "levels of meaning" may be more suitably or evangelically understood as applications of the literal biblical text to various and appropriate settings.

13. George H. Tavard, *Transiency and Permanence: The Nature of Theology According to Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1954), cites on p. 47 Bonaventure's *Hexaëmeron* 13:11: "As faith, hope and charity bring to God, likewise all creatures suggest what is to be believed, expected and done. Accordingly, there is a threefold spiritual sense: *allegory*

concerns what is to be believed; *anagogy* what is to be expected; *tropology* what is to be done, for charity overflows into action." See also Bonaventure, *De reductione artium ad theologiam* 5, in *Tria Opuscula* (Quaracchi: St. Bonaventure College Press, 1925), p. 372 [For the English translation, see *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, trans. Emma Therese Healy (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Saint Bonaventure College, 1940)] and Bonaventure, "Prologue" to the *Breviloquium*, pro. 4. 1–2, in *Tria Opuscula* (Quaracchi: St. Bonaventure College Press, 1925), 20 [English translation: *Breviloquium*, trans. Erwin Esser Nemmers (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1947), p. 12.]

14. Nicholas of Lyra, *Prologus secundus de intentione auctoris et modo procedendi, "Incipit prologus"*; PL 113.28 C–D. See James G. Kiecker, "The Hermeneutical Principles and Exegetical Methods of Nicholas of Lyra, O.F.M. (ca. 1270–1349)," PhD diss., Marquette University, 1978.

15. Jaroslav Pelikan, "Luther the Expositor," Companion Volume of *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 107.

16. See WA 12:205–220 and WA 19:72–113, *Formula Missae et Communionis pro Ecclesia Vuittembergensi* (1523) and *Deutsche Messe und ordnung Gottis diensts* (1526), where Luther exhibits this approach. Cf. AE 53:15–40, 51–90. The Lutheran Church continued to follow Luther's approach (see *FC SD XI*, 3 in Tappert, pp. 616).

17. See AE 34:333–38; WA 54:185–187.

18. Johann Staupitz was not alone in pointing Luther to the heritage of Christocentric interpretations. In Luther's own monastic training, he read the writings of Augustine and discovered the truth and joy of Paul's gospel proclamations.

19. AE 22:8.

20. See Luther's lectures on the Psalter in AE 10–11.

21. "The letter teaches what was done; allegory, what is believed; moral, what is to be done; anagogy, where we are headed." This distich had been attributed to Nicholas of Lyra, following Migne [J. P. Migne, ed. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Latin series, Vol. 113, Walafrida Strabi, (Paris: Garnier Freres, 1879), 28 D and 38 B], in his prologues to the *Glossa ordinaria*; but its origin has more recently been related to Augustine of Dacia, according to Henri de Lubac, "Introduction" to *Exégèse Médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'Écriture* (Paris: Aubier, 1959–64) I, part 1, 23. Nicholas of Lyra, following an old medieval pattern, used this hermeneutical rhyme in his *Postilla* on Galatians 4:3.

22. AE 26:336–351; WA 40<sup>1</sup>:518–538.

23. Anthony Nemetz, "Literalness and the *Sensus Litteralis*," *Speculum* 34 (1959), pp. 76–89.

24. Dr. James Voelz's Concordia Seminary class notes on semantic dimensions of a text distinguish between the "meaning of words of a text," the "significance" of the text, the "implication" of the text, and finally its "application."

25. A. Skevington Wood, *Luther's Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1960), p. 35, cites Luther's statement *Scriptura sacra est Deus incarnatus* ("Sacred Scripture is God incarnate").

26. See James S. Preus, *From Shadow to Promise*, noted above.

27. Critical editions of these commentaries are available in the following: *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 2, edited by J. K. F. Knaake (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1884); *D.*

*Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 401–402, ed. Karl Drescher (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1911–14); *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 57, ed. G. Bebermeyer (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1939); and *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 59, ed. Gerhard Ebeling (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1983); along with *Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften* 8 and 9: *Auslegung des Neuen Testaments* 2 and 3, ed. Johann Georg Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1892–93).

English translations and studies on these works are also available: *A Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians by Martin Luther*, trans. Erasmus Middleton (Eastern District of Pennsylvania: Salmon S. Miles, 1840); *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians by Martin Luther*, trans. and abridged Theodore Graebner (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1939); *Luther's Works* 26, ed. and trans. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963); and *Luther's Works* 27, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. (1535) Jaroslav Pelikan and (1519) Richard Jungkuntz (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964); Gerhard Schulze, "Die Vorlesung Luthers über den Galaterbrief von 1531 und der gedruckte Kommentar von 1535," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 98/99 (1926), pp. 18–82; Karin Bornkamm, *Luthers Auslegungen des Galaterbriefs von 1519 und 1531: Ein Vergleich* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1963); Hermann Kleinknecht, trans., *D. Martin Luthers Epistel-Auslegung*, Vol. 4: Der Galaterbrief (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1980); Kenneth Hagen, *Luther's Approach to Scripture as Seen in his Commentaries on Galatians 1519-1538* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1993).

28. See WA 2 (lecture notes are available in WA 57 [Gal]) and AE 27 for several dozen references to allegory, even before the term is used by St. Paul in Galatians 4:24 ff.

29. T iiiii: "mag man mit Allegoriis das ist mit verdeckter vnd vrborgner schrifft nichts bezeugen vnd probirê/" and U iii: "vnd allegoristh das ist verborgen vnd verdeckt/" (A microfilm of this German translation was made available to me by Prof. Kenneth Hagen, ThD, of Marquette University.)

30. WA 2:549, 27–28; cf. AE 27:309.

31. WA 2:550, 20–28; cf. AE 27:311.

32. WA 2:551, 27–32; cf. AE 27:312–13.

33. WA 40<sup>1</sup>:463, 9: "allegoriae . . . sol als Christum in sich fassen."

34. Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1964), p. 93, demonstrates this aspect of the Victorine tradition; Smalley, "3. The Bible in the Medieval Schools," in chap. 6 "The Exposition and Exegesis of Scripture," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969), 2:216; and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.1.10; ed. Thomas Gilby, Blackfriars' translation (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 36/37–38/39.

35. WA 2:610, 11–26; cf. AE 27:399–400.

36. WA 2:550, 8–16; cf. AE 27:310–11.

37. WA 2:550, 34–55,4; cf. AE 27:311.

38. WA 2:551, 16–27; cf. AE 27:312.

39. WA 2:557, 11–12; cf. AE 27:321.

40. WA 2:556, 16–20; cf. AE 27:319.

41. WA 40<sup>1</sup>:463, 21–464, 12 (AE 26:298–99); 532, 29–39 (AE 26:347); 649, 17–19 (AE 26:430); 664, 27–28 (AE 26:441); 40<sup>2</sup>:162, 14–15 (AE 27:127).

42. WA 40<sup>1</sup>:653.14; cf. AE 26:433.

43. WA 40<sup>1</sup>:652, 32–53,13; cf. AE 26:432–33.

44. WA 40<sup>1</sup>:657, 12–22; cf. AE 26:435–6.

45. WA 40<sup>1</sup>:655, 32–56,12 (AE 26:435); 665, 35–36 (AE 26:442).

46. WA 40<sup>1</sup>:668, 23–27; cf. AE 26:444.

47. WA 40<sup>1</sup>:653, 3–5 is from his lectures, but was not repeated in the commentaries; WA 401.663,12–19 (AE 26:440).

48. WA 40<sup>1</sup>:660, 15–664, 28; cf. AE 26:438–441.

49. Gregory the Great, *Homiliarum in Evangelia* 2.40; *PL* 76.1302: "allegoria fidem aedificat."

50. Hagen, *Luther's Approach*, p. 126. Ralph W. Doermann, "Luther's Principles of Biblical Interpretation," in *Interpreting Luther's Legacy*, ed. Fred W. Meuser and Stanley D. Schneider (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), p. 24, makes this same point, affirming the necessity of faith for a biblical interpreter in Luther's hermeneutics.

# The Language of Faith

BURNELL F. ECKARDT JR.



The Church Growth challenge facing the churches of the Lutheran Confessions today is at its heart a concern over language, that is, not only words themselves, but what kind of words, what setting for words, what style (as opposed to substance) of speech. I submit that this crisis poses as momentous a challenge for the church of our day as did any of the major heresies that ever faced her, even dating to the days of the ecumenical councils, when the Holy Spirit of God maintained by grace the church's purity of confession against Gnostics, Docetists, Arians, Donatists, Modalists, and Tritheists alike. This essay's intent is to demonstrate the importance of addressing squarely this current challenge to the church's language, through a rediscovery of the language of faith, in order that she may yet again, by the same Spirit, maintain her purity of confession. What the church needs, I would submit, is to learn (one might say, to relearn) a comprehensive employment of the language of faith, which is a manner, or style (if you prefer) of talking about God; a style that derives from the words and grammar of God in the sacred Scriptures.

For all the pious talk we hear in Lutheran circles about the Word of God as the source and fountainhead of the church's very existence, and as the single ultimate authority in the church, it strikes me as curious (to put the matter euphemistically) that at the same time so much effort is being put into alternative ways of communicating about God. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet," we all boldly confess, but soon afterwards so many of us scramble for all sorts of popular evangelism tools or programs, or the latest attention-getting fads, never mindful and ever forgetful of the all-sufficient power of the word of God to do its own work. I contend therefore that we need to reexamine the question of *how* we are to talk about God, in order that we might recover an appreciation of the sacred character of the very words we use in doing so.

I wish to proceed, first, by considering the Church Growth Movement from the standpoint of its challenge to the church's language, to show that this question of the "how" of language,

the question of style, lies at the root of the controversy. Then I shall proceed to the main thesis of the essay, an introduction to the language of faith.

## THE LANGUAGE OF THE POPULIST CHALLENGE TO THE FAITH

Since many others before me have provided critiques of the Church Growth Movement in honorable ways, from a confessional point of view, and have carefully and laudably exposed the dangers of this movement, there is really no need to rehash their critiques. I might simply refer you to the most recent such critique in the July 1993 *LOGIA*, the article by Kenneth Wieting entitled "The Method of Meta-Church: The Point of Truth and the Points that Trouble,"<sup>1</sup> or to the July-October 1986 *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, an article by Glenn Huebel entitled "The Church Growth Movement: A Word of Caution,"<sup>2</sup> or to Harold Senkbeil's book *Sanctification: Christ in Action*,<sup>3</sup> or to any number of praiseworthy assessments in the past seven years or so. We might sum up the general flavor of most critiques by saying, rather glibly and quite inadequately, that they have alerted us well that this movement's boast of being "people-centered" is a *prima facie* admission that it is not Christ-centered, which these critiques have also demonstrated. The intent of this essay, however, is to complement earlier studies by providing another confessional approach to the movement, in terms of the language of faith.

The Church Growth Movement, as I indicated, tends to deal with the question not only of what we should say, but of how we should say it; not only of clarity of expression but of style of expression; not only of the meaning of the words expressed, but of the nuances or sensitivities demonstrated in the choice of words. It seems that the church has become increasingly preoccupied of late with worries over sensitivity, due no doubt to the culture in which she lives as a lily among thorns. Today's American culture has a fetish for sensitivity speech. Recently the Marquette University Warriors determined to change their name, in order to mollify Marquette's worriers, who fear giving ethnic offense. Similarly, efforts on numerous college campuses to pass "hate speech laws" have surfaced, whose intent is to shackle any hint of racial bigotry. Since Anita Hill raised our consciousness by questioning the propriety of making a joke about a pubic hair on a coke can, she can be forgiven even for slander, even, that is, if Clarence Thomas never actually said that. The presidential appointment of

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Donna Shalala, whom many regard as the queen of political correctness, is likewise indicative of the rising national tide of crusaders for sensitivity. The tomahawk chop, the ethnic joke, even the outdated ethnic label, are thought to be in poor taste; indeed, even chivalry is now hopelessly out of date, stigmatized as Victorian and oppressive of women who would prefer standing on the bus or opening doors for themselves to being stereotyped by the implications of gallantry toward the weaker sex. This, alas, is the world in which we live, who say with the psalmist, “I am a stranger in the earth.”

Thus do we find, as all along we should have known we would, efforts also in the churches to speak with a heightened sensitivity toward the desires and expectations of the hearers. Even in churches that have no political agenda, who claim that the word and the sacraments are their only agenda, such as churches comprising the great majority of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, there has arisen this new concern for sensitivity toward what people are perceived to want. The Church Growth Movement is, from this vantage point, nothing more than an outgrowth of the current cultural milieu.

It has occurred to me that the Church Growth Movement really needs a better name, in order that it be more readily identified for what it is. I think it might be more suitable to consider the Church Growth Movement as a populist movement, because of the primary thrust evident in that movement’s main objectives, namely, the making of churches that are deemed successful in the estimation of the common people, the *populus*. Webster’s dictionary defines a populist as “a believer in the rights, wisdom, or virtues of the common people,” and thus I find the label fitting because what is assumed at the root of this movement’s collective thought is the notion that especially the *wisdom* of the common people is worthy of guiding the church. Verily, the Church Growth Movement is marked by the employment of what many would consider common-sense principles, in the interest of producing measurable degrees of success. Since the etymological root of “common sense” would be the Latin *sensus communis*, we can derive also the label “populist” from this consideration, namely, of common sense, or *sensus communis* as the collective sense or wisdom of the community.

Besides, if historians will one day rank this movement alongside the great heresies of the past, it really ought to have an adjectival name, a name ending in *-ist* or *-ism*. They won’t just want to say, “Oh yes, the 1990s, that was the age of the Church Growth Movement,” for that sounds rather clumsy, don’t you think? Or worse, people might say, “Ah, the 1990s, that was the age of church growth,” a rather positive-sounding label for a very troubling challenge. In fact “church growth” could not be further from the truth, from the standpoint of the prosperity of the true church, the Bride of Christ—unless, of course, we think of growth as response to this oppression.

We might also understand “growth” in a different sense. That is, indeed the church, the Bride, has a growth, a cancer that is causing her great distress of body and soul. Thus let us elevate the Church Growth Movement to the status it surely deserves. This is no mere syndrome; it is a real disease, and therefore it merits a bona fide label, such as all diseases have. I submit therefore the label “populism.” Henceforth herein I shall use that label,

in order to venerate the movement with the degree of honor it has unquestionably earned.

The populist movement is interested in producing “user friendly churches,” to use the phrase coined by George Barna.<sup>4</sup> The subtitle of his book of that name is informative: “What Christians Need to Know about the Churches People Love to Go To.” Here is one book you *can* judge by its title, for the jacket’s brief *precis* includes these words: “What does it mean for a church to be user friendly? It means providing people with an accessible way to worship God, a comfortable place to bring their friends, and [note here the key word] a *sensitive*, creative community they can belong to—one that is [another key word] *wise* enough not to get in the way of the task at hand: reaching the world for Christ.”

The Missouri Synod’s own obsession with Church Growth principles is seen especially in the alarming rise of a sentiment that has no regard for the liturgy or the hymnal. What this amounts to, in terms of the reasons for this disregard, is a desire to talk about God in a new way, a new style. The Church Growth moguls are quick to assert that Evangelical style is no threat to Lutheran substance, which is simply another way of saying that their concern, at least according to their own explanations, is not with *what* is being said, but with *how* we say it.

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***This is no mere syndrome; it is a real disease . . . “populism.”***

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From the populist view the liturgy is by its very nature an impediment to the church’s success, since the liturgy is neither user friendly nor sensitive. The words of the liturgy are rote repetition each time they are said. That is, the liturgy does not give overt service to sensitivity toward the current communal perceptions of the *populus*. It is always the same; how, then, can it be people-oriented, when the perception of people’s needs is ever changing? Further, the liturgy is only known by insiders, those who are already familiar with it. Thus it cannot help but be insensitive to visitors, that class of people the populist movement is primarily concerned with. Not only, the reasoning goes, does the liturgy offend, it offends the very target group of the populists, the visitors.

Thus the liturgy is not, and cannot be, populist in nature, for it does not meet the perceived needs of late-twentieth-century Americans in particular, who do not like to feel as though they do not belong anywhere, least of all in a church! It is well known among observers who have occasion to compare American to European church attendance levels that Americans are an extremely church-going people, notwithstanding the common lament about the size of our delinquent lists! The last thing a populist will want to do, therefore, is make any American feel out-of-place in the place of worship. The liturgy, by these standards, is quite overdue for a pink slip.

Yet there remain a good number among us who are still loathe to discard so noble a thing, even if they do not know exactly why. So instead of dismissing the liturgy or the hymnal

altogether, they are found making meager attempts to lighten the undesirable elements of it: for instance, by providing a variety of different “liturgies,” in an attempt to satisfy the populist’s continual itching to hold a channel-changer in his hand. Attempts to make the liturgy user friendly include also the interjection of interruptions into the flow of the liturgy to make occasional references to the page number in the hymnal, or to explain the meaning of certain liturgical actions, or to explain portions of the readings (such interruptions are reportedly even happening in the midst of a single reading!).

The overall concern, clearly, is one of being sensitive to the perceived needs of certain people, and this concern arises out of a populist mindset whose chief resource is the common sense of those people, the *sensus communis*.

### THE LANGUAGE OF THE FAITH: A RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE

#### *Why the Language of Faith Is Requisite*

To be sure, the catholic and apostolic faith has always been beset with challenges concerning language, for language has ever been faith’s way of manifesting itself in the world. Yet this challenge tends to have to do not merely with the words communicated but with the kind of communication employed, the manner or method of communication of the words.

But here another false dichotomy has been erected, namely, a distinction between words and communication; for in the simplest analysis, words *are* communication. The commission of words to the printed page is not prior but posterior to the expression of words orally; thus it is false to suppose that words in themselves require something additional in order for them to be effective. Words are communication; they do not require communication. Their very existence depends on their having been communicated.

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### *The language used in the communication of the gospel must be a language of faith.*

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Not only is this so, but more importantly, language itself is first of all a divine and not a human attribute, for it was God who spoke first, before man was even created. God said, “Let there be light,” before any man was even created to hear the sound of his voice. Speech is divine, then. Language is of God, not of man. From this perspective it is less proper to refer to man’s ability to speak as a human attribute than to refer to it as a remnant of his creation in the image of God, though it is true that since the Fall all men are liars, as the psalmist declares (Ps 116).

Therefore, when considering the word of God, how much more must we affirm the self-sufficiency of it. If all words are by their very nature self-sufficient, clearly it would be improper to

suppose that the word of God requires the methods of men for its communication. Rather, all men need the word of God, in order properly to talk about God at all, or even, for that matter, to talk about talking about God. For the gospel is already words, speech, the word of God. “In the beginning was the Word,” not the methods of men.

St. Paul is even bold to declare his own methodological weakness, saying, “I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God” (1 Cor 2). Evidently he had not been given training in the “how” of communication, yet this was of no concern to him, for, as he continues, “my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” Yet he at once goes on to declare that “we,” that is, the holy apostles, “speak not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

I believe that an acceptable gloss at this point would be to add “teachings,” and to suggest “words” for “things,” thus allowing the text to read, “comparing spiritual words with spiritual teachings.” The phrase πνευματικῶς πνευματικά; συγγκρίνοντες contains two substantive adjectives, both of which demand the supplying of a noun in translation. The nouns to be supplied need not be guessed, however, for they are given in the immediate context, namely, first “words,” λόγους, and second, “which the Holy Ghost teacheth,” which actually is a translation of ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος, more literally, “in the teachings spiritual.” Thus we have a text that reads more accurately, “we speak not in the teachings, the words of men’s wisdom, but in the teachings of the Spirit, combining spiritual words with spiritual teachings.”

That is to say, the words that we must use in talking about God are themselves spiritual words, words that have a character of their own, which bear no direct correspondence to the words of the wisdom of men. That is, they are *divine* words, words issuing directly out of the mouth of God, as it was in the beginning. Yet, says the Apostle, *we* speak these words, *we* who are men, when we speak about God, and therein lies the mystery not only at the heart of the word of God, but of the incarnation of God the Word. That men can speak words of God is a mystery, even as the incarnation of God as man is a mystery.

#### *What the Language of Faith Is*

So it is that the language used in the communication of the gospel must be a language of faith, a language delivered from God himself. Simply put, the language of faith is the word of God. The term “language of faith” is apropos not only because it refers to the word of God on the sacred page, but as it springs from our own lips. That is, it becomes our language as we learn how to talk about God; yet it derives from the word of God. This is the language the faithful must learn to speak, specifically as they employ the mental capacity to construct sentences, to communicate by means of their own sanctified volition what they know about God and the holy gospel. The language of faith now becomes not *merely* the word of God, but particularly the word of God on the lips of the faithful.

This is where liturgy can be seen to be essential to the faith. “O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise” (Ps 51), we pray as the opening liturgical expression of the day, a veritable acknowledgment that our words, our speech, our language must come from God if we are to talk about him rightly at all. Then immediately do we continue, getting to the heart of the gospel: “Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord” (Ps 70). And then also do we at once name him and ascribe to him all the credit for this deliverance, saying: “Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.”

### *Learning the Language of Faith*

Thus the faithful must learn the word of God in order to call upon God, who alone can defend them; for how shall they call upon him of whom they have not heard? That is to say, how can faith pray unless it is given words to pray, the very words that God provides, the language of faith. For in the psalter David cries out, saying, “By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer . . . incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech” (Ps 17:4,6); and again, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart . . . teach me thy statutes . . . With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth” (Ps 119:11–13); or yet again, “Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word . . . hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness” (Ps 119:148–149).

What this means is that prayer is not *simply* talking to God, as many erroneously think. Rather, prayer is something learned. As infants grow they learn to speak; they learn to call out to their mothers and fathers. So also, the baptized must learn to speak the spiritual words of God; they too must learn to call out, just as newborns must learn. This is why, when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he taught them first of all to say, “Our Father.” This exchange between Jesus and his disciples is most informative, for it tells us quite clearly that they would not know how to pray unless Jesus taught them. Simply knowing how to talk is not enough. One could not have thoughtlessly replied to one of these disciples, “Why, praying is simple, you just talk to God,” for it is clear that Jesus took their question very seriously, and in this we see that it was a salutary question. Moreover, Jesus does not give in response an analytic explanation of how to pray, but simply says, “Pray like this,” and then gives them the very words; thus the very words are given by the Word himself, Jesus Christ, our Lord. They are his special language for use in talking to God. Perhaps pastors would not be so quick to chide their people for asking them to pray for them, if they realized that this was perhaps their way of acknowledging that they, like the disciples, do not know how to pray and need to be taught before they can be expected to say their own prayers. For prayer requires first its own special language, the language of faith.

Therefore, the first and essential step in learning the language of faith is to learn the liturgy, which employs only the language of faith throughout. This is why the liturgy is critical to the life of faith. In learning the liturgy, one quickly learns to appreciate the benefit of meditative reflection and repetition. When certain prayers are repeated in immediate succession, as, for example, in the Kyrie, we must see this as an aid to our learning rather than as an impediment to meeting our needs. For these words are God’s words, and for this reason alone we dare never deem them

worthless. Right here is where the populist mindset must be confronted, for the faithful must *insist* that the words and language of faith are faithful and true, and therefore worthy of continual repetition. The populists declare with Barna that “ministry by mimicry almost invariably results in deterioration.”<sup>25</sup> The faithful must confront this declaration *by means of* mimicry, defiantly declaring by their way of worship that they wish indeed to learn a mimicry of the holy words of God. For it is not only my heart but also my mouth that shall show forth his praise.

Those who cannot abide the threefold repetition of the Kyrie’s cry for mercy would surely have no comprehension of the church that in previous generations customarily chanted a *nine-fold* repetition of it. Or again, those who have trouble repeating the Gloria Patri more than once or twice a service would surely never understand the Gregorian chanting of twenty-one psalms a day, each concluding with the same doxological stanza.

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***Therefore, the first and essential step in learning the language of faith is to learn the liturgy.***

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When populists complain that we cannot expect Americans to remain attentive to one thing for too long, or that we must provide them with plenty of variety, or that we must be sensitive to American tastes and desires, they fail to understand something critical, namely, that faith is and must be attentive to *only* one thing, just as Mary was, who sat at Jesus’ feet and heard his word while her sister Martha complained. Jesus’ response to Martha, then, is similarly appropriate for the populists: “thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41–42). The populist mindset, which prefers variety and novelty, is therefore inimical to the mind of faith, which is singular, and must be stayed on the One. American tastes and desires indicate a sore need of catechesis, of careful instruction, by sitting as it were at Jesus’ feet, in order as children not only to learn of him but also to learn how to pray to him, in careful repetition and mimicry of his own words.

### *The Militancy of the Language of Faith*

The language of faith, as the language of the Church Militant, must itself be militant, that is, stubbornly refusing to yield to the ever-changing winds of culture. For the confession of the Church Militant is ever a defense against the encroachments of the doctrines of demons, in whatever disguise they come. To think instinctively at this point that the church must, on the contrary, relate to the people (a notoriously ambiguous term) is to have yielded already to those encroachments, for it is in essence a denial of the ability of the word to relate to all people on its own terms and not theirs. An unyielding employment of liturgy is itself a confession of faith in the power of the word to do its own work; and this is especially so in confronting a populist milieu with its implicit denial of this very thing.

This language is rightly called the language of faith not only because it is from faith and for faith, but also because it *requires* faith. Its use is accompanied by the conviction that it is only the word that produces faith. The use of this language must expect that its effectiveness will be under the authority of the Holy Ghost. The promise “My word shall not return to me void” requires faith. To use the language of faith *consistently*, even in the face of the statistics and charts and mounting claims of effectiveness spewed in the powerful and persuasive name of populism, is to believe, as it were, in the darkness. For “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith believes what it cannot see; faith believes that the gospel is the power of God. Faith does not need, nor can it abide, the intrusion of elements that would betray this power by claiming a power of their own.

Thus the battlefield of faith, especially in view of the current challenges to it, is *precisely* the liturgy. It is here that the faithful make their good confession, by virtue not only of using, but of their insistence upon using, the historic liturgy. Yet since this is a battlefield, faith thus engaging in battle must expect affliction from the enemy. Such expectations are apocalyptic, that is, mindful of the cosmic battle between good and evil and of the imminence of eschatological victory and vindication of good over evil. But apocalyptic expectations are also, coincidentally, characteristic of the language of faith itself. To use militantly the language of faith is to oppose the populist mindset and is thus to make powerful enemies. But here one quickly finds correspondence, through employment of the language of faith, to the afflictions of the faithful of all times at the hands of their enemies.

This is especially the case in the employment of the psalter, which is one reason it must remain an integral part of the liturgy. The psalms are rife with references to the enemy, the wicked, the proud, the fools, the evildoers, the ungodly, calling repeatedly upon the name of God for deliverance from such as these. When in the battles of the Church Militant the faithful repeat the psalms, particularly the imprecatory psalms, they cannot help but begin again to see things apocalyptically, as part of that cosmic battle. Indeed, the enemies are powerful, for they are not really the church-growth moguls or populists or any other gainsayers against the faith and its language—for “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

### *Preaching the Language of Faith*

Especially preachers of the gospel must understand these things as of first importance, even as St. Paul declares to the Corinthians: “I delivered unto you first of all *that which I also received*, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again,” and so forth.

Therefore, as praying is not simply talking to God, neither is preaching simply talking about God. Preaching and public speaking are not the same thing; a sermon and a speech are not the same thing, according to the very same words of the apostle I raised earlier: “We speak not in the teachings, the words of men’s wisdom, but in the teachings of the Spirit, combining spiritual words with spiritual teachings.”

Therefore homiletical concerns are not the same as the concerns of the public speaker, who does not have the authority of

the Word of God on which to rely. So the public speaker must be an entertaining speaker; he must speak in sound bites, to use Dale Meyer’s term,<sup>6</sup> to keep the attention of the American consumer. His efforts must ever bear in mind that his words by themselves require his embellishment.

But the preacher must be concerned, rather, with one thing only. His own constant attention to the One, to Christ, will itself then influence his choice of words in his own preaching. Pastors who are too busy for study and prayer, for employing with constancy of heart and mind the language of faith in their own meditations, will never be able to preach. They may become entertaining speakers whom people will think are preaching, but if their language is not the language of faith it is not true preaching. The school of the preacher must be the *prie-Dieu*, the prayer desk,

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*Thus the battlefield of faith, especially in view of the current challenges to it, is precisely the liturgy.*

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with psalter and liturgy in hand. For far too long this essential ingredient in the preparation of men for the ministry has been neglected, and the results are telling. Perhaps the reason is that its vital link to the words the pastor must speak has not been considered. “Do not be drunk with wine,” warns the Apostle, “but be filled with the Spirit.” In the tenor of these words St. Augustine used to issue repeated admonitions from his own pulpit that his people become inebriated with the word. As copious drinking alters the mind, so too does copious meditation and use of the language of faith alter the mind; a heavy dose of mimicry and repetitions of prayers of the psalter, the Our Father, even of the prayers of the church will inevitably take control of the mind of the preacher as he ponders the sacred page and speaks on it. His own grammar and word-patterns will thus begin to become the grammar and word-patterns he has learned from David; his exhortations will mimic those of the prophets; his admonitions will become those of Jesus; and thus and so will he then continue in the very tradition of St. Paul to deliver that which he also received: the word of God, the language of faith. LOGIA

### NOTES

1. *LOGIA* 2, no. 3 (July 1993), pp. 14–21.
2. *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 50, nos. 3 and 4 (July–October 1986), pp. 165–181.
3. Harold L. Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1989).
4. George Barna, *User Friendly Churches: What Christians Need to Know about the Churches People Love to Go To* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1991).
5. Barna, p. 16.
6. “Reaching the TV Generation: Meeting the Challenge of Short Attention Spans, an Interview Moderated by Ken Schurb,” *LOGIA* 2:3 (July 1993), p. 22.

# Creation ex Nihilo: The Way of God

WILLIAM C. WEINRICH



Toward the end of the second century, Galen, the philosopher-physician, wrote an anatomical treatise, *De usu partium*, in which he takes the occasion to compare Moses with Plato. Galen marvels at the order and harmony of the parts of the human body, even of those parts that seem the most insignificant and useless. While discussing the uniform length of the eyelashes, Galen notes that the demiurge had chosen “the best out of the possibilities of becoming” and had therefore made the eyelashes to be of equal length and erect, because “this was better.” Galen explains that precisely concerning this point his own opinion “and that of Plato and of the other Greeks who follow the right method in natural science” differ from the view of Moses. For Moses “it seems enough to say that God simply willed the arrangement of matter and it was arranged in due order; for he [Moses] believes everything to be possible with God, even should he wish to make a bull or a horse out of ashes.” “We, however, do not hold this,” continues Galen. “We say that certain things are impossible by nature and that God does not even attempt such things at all but that he chooses the best out of the possibilities of becoming.”<sup>1</sup>

Here, as clearly as one could wish it, is expressed the confrontation between Christianity and Greek paganism, which formed the matrix and context for the church’s assertion that God created the world *ex nihilo*, “out of nothing.” The dominant culture in which early Christianity arose and achieved its first development was pervaded by a cosmology classically adumbrated in Plato’s *Timaeus*. According to Plato, God was a “worker,” a “demiurge” who acted upon pre-existing matter. God was like a carpenter or an artist who brings order out of chaotic, disorderly matter, beauty out of dissolution, harmony out of disharmony.<sup>2</sup> Greek philosophy was interested in the “cosmos,” the ordered, harmonious universe. The world’s absolute existence was taken for granted. What required explanation was its beauty, its functional orderliness. Indeed, for Greek philosophy the cosmos in its sheer materiality was a necessary postulate of philosophical reflection. Greek thinking wanted to account for the

order that characterized the cosmos; it did not strive to account for the very existence of the cosmos. For God to “create” meant that he arranged into orderly and meaningful patterns. Matter itself, therefore, pre-existed and was eternal.<sup>3</sup> What was true of the demiurge of Plato was similarly true of the Unmoved Mover of Aristotle or of the Logos of the Stoics. God is the ultimate ground of the beauty, harmony, and order of the world.<sup>4</sup>

As such, God guaranteed providential regularity and purpose through order and inherent laws of nature that expressed the potentialities inherently existent within the material on which God worked. God was not free vis-à-vis the eternal, pre-existing matter. He was rather limited by the possibilities inherent in the matter, much like a bricklayer is limited by the potentialities inherent in brick. A bricklayer may make a beautiful wall, for that is potentially possible with bricks, but a bricklayer cannot make a snake from bricks, for that is not potentially possible with bricks. As Galen said, “certain things are impossible by nature.” “It would not have been possible for him [God] to make a man out of a stone in an instant, by simply wishing it.”

This pervasive Platonic point of view did possess its legitimate interests. From Galen it is clear that a divine will wholly independent and autonomous of nature’s own limits appeared to be arbitrary and to introduce irrationality and disorder into the world. For the Greek, to be able “to make a bull or a horse out of ashes” was not a divine virtue. The Epicurean philosopher Lucretius noted the practical importance of the Platonic viewpoint. People are fearful when confronted by the arbitrary will of the gods, who are then understood to be and are experienced as fickle and unstable. People are not encouraged to exercise virtue when there is no correlation between what humans do and what the gods may do in return.<sup>5</sup> If the gods have an unrestrained and arbitrary will, human reason and human responsibility have no status. Limited by the potentialities of the material principle, deity was a guarantee for a rational, meaningful, and orderly life. Unlimited by the potentialities of the material principle, deity became capricious, inconstant, and wayward.

Despite his opposition, Galen was correct in his description of Moses as one who “believes that everything is possible with God.” For the biblical writers and the early Christians had other concerns than that of explaining the orderliness and harmony of the world. Christian thinkers were aware that Platonic idealism did not and could not invest the individual and the particular

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with intrinsic meaning and significance. Individual appearances may be part of an overarching order and harmony, but they have no intrinsic meaning apart from that ordered whole. For the ancient cosmologists, individual and particular existence was essentially ephemeral and shadowy. It had no purpose, and it had no destiny. Particular existence, considered in relation to the ordered whole, was considered insignificant and could even take on tragic proportions. Faced by impersonal forces and merely a member of an ordered nature, particular existence, strictly speaking, had no future. Having no intrinsic being, particular existence was given to death and corruption. Characterized by absolute “becoming,” individual existence experienced death as naturally as it possessed life. Given to change, it was in perpetual corruption. It is no accident, therefore, that the Epicureans came to the conclusion that the world was a random movement of atoms and possessed no inherent purpose. Nor is it accidental that Greek philosophy, when confronted by the more pessimistic philosophies of the Near East, developed into Gnostic and Manichaean denials of the goodness of the material world.

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***The assertion of the creatio ex nihilo is not primarily a statement about the first moment of the world’s existence.***

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It is a matter of some debate whether biblical and intertestamental texts provide an unambiguous assertion of the *creatio ex nihilo*. It is sometimes asserted that 2 Mc 7:28 makes such a claim, but that may be doubted.<sup>6</sup> The Wisdom of Solomon, while writing against the fatalistic view that the world was created by chance, nonetheless can still make use of Plato’s formula that God created the world from “formless matter.”<sup>7</sup> The Jewish philosopher Philo never transcends a pure Platonism in this question. Second-century Christian apologists, such as Justin Martyr, also make ample use of Plato’s *Timaeus*.<sup>8</sup>

In confrontation with Platonic dualism and its understanding of the relationship between God and the world, however, second-century Christian thinkers are clearly developing an explicit doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo*. Their primary interest is to assert the omnipotence and freedom of God. God created the world and all that exists “from nothing,” and this he did by will and command. It is important to note that in this the Christians did not merely proffer an alternative explanation of the world’s origins and its order. They were not describing how the world came into existence, so that the world, as effect, might be understood by its cause, God. Were that the case, the Christians would simply have remained within the parameters of Greek philosophy, which sought to explain the operations of the world by delineating the relation between the effecting active principle and the effected passive principle.

It was perhaps Tatian who first expressly asserted that God originated matter. God brings forth the unformed matter of Plato; it is the Logos who gives form and order to this material

chaos.<sup>9</sup> In Theophilus of Antioch we find an explicit counterpoint to Plato. The sovereign will of God alone is the basis of creation. Had God simply made the world out of pre-existing matter, he would be no greater than a mere handworker. But God’s power is manifested in that he makes what he wills “out of nothing.”<sup>10</sup> It is evident in this argument of Theophilus that the “unformed, pre-existing matter” upon which the Platonic demiurge works has been replaced by the will of God. While the Greek demiurge created “out of unformed matter,” the biblical God created “out of nothing,” that is, by his will and command. For Theophilus, this willing into existence of that which was in absolute non-existence establishes the monarchy, the singular rule, of God. God’s sole rule is manifested in that he alone is “unbegotten” and calls all matter into existence. More explicit yet is Irenaeus. He excludes any notion of pre-existing matter by saying that God took “from himself the substance of the creatures, and the patterns of things made, and the type of all the ornaments in the world.”<sup>11</sup>

Clearly to be noted in all of this is that the assertion of the *creatio ex nihilo* is not primarily a statement about the first moment of the world’s existence. It does not merely indicate that the world, having had absolutely no existence, was once brought into existence. *Creatio ex nihilo* is not pure protology, a statement about the world’s beginning. It is first and foremost a statement about God and how he relates to the world at all times and in all places. *Creatio ex nihilo* is also a statement about the nature of the creature and how it relates to God the Creator at all times and in all places. In short, the *creatio ex nihilo* makes the necessary distinction between God and the creature, especially man. Irenaeus makes this precise point: “While men, indeed, cannot make anything out of nothing, but only out of matter already existing, yet God is in this point pre-eminently superior to men, that he himself called into being the substance of his creation, when previously it had no existence.”<sup>12</sup> Luther would later make the same point: “He [God] and he alone made all things from nothing.”<sup>13</sup> Let us expand upon the importance of this point.

The Scriptures begin with the one almighty God of grace. We are told that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gn 1:1). In biblical usage, the word for “create” (סָבַר), always has God as its subject. It lays special emphasis on the totally free character of God’s creating. This “interest” of the word סָבַר corresponds to the interest of the early Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, which likewise intended to proclaim the absolute freedom of God vis-à-vis the world. God created “from nothing.” This “nothing” was not thought to be some kind of void into which God placed a positive and material existence. This “nothing” was not thought to be some kind of something outside of God from which or upon which God acted. This “nothing” was simply thought to be the sovereign will of God. To say that God created *ex nihilo* was to say that he created by will and command. Nothing preceded God’s will to create; nothing external to God moved him or required him to create. God freely willed to create the world, and the world came into existence and exists purely on the basis of God’s willing command, “Let there be!” God himself, therefore, is utterly autonomous and independent of the world and relates to the world only as the one who wills to create it. God relates to the world, not as Highest Being—that is Greek thought.

God rather relates to the world as Highest Will—that is biblical thought. Indeed, wholly in line with his patristic predecessors Theophilus and Irenaeus, Luther can write that God’s sovereignty lies in his will and power to create. In fact, in his *Bondage of the Will* Luther simply asserts that “Free Will” is a divine name.<sup>14</sup>

This sovereignty of God, however, does not imply that God is arbitrary and capricious, as Galen and the Platonists feared. That God wills to create purely “out of nothing” apart from any constraint to do so manifests rather a will to give and to bestow. Since God’s bestowing is on that which is nothing and has nothing of its own, God’s will to create reveals a will to love by the free giving of himself and all that is his. God, precisely as the absolute Creator, relates to the world essentially as the gracious Giver. This was, in fact, the determinative interest of the early Christian assertion that God created “from nothing.” Steeped in the Scriptures of Israel, which tell of the election of Israel, although it was the least among the nations, and of the repeated reconstitution of Israel in the face of more powerful neighbors; steeped in the apostolic proclamation of the birth of the Savior apart from human intervention and of his resurrection from the dead; the early Christian writers perceived in these things nothing other than that selfsame Free Will that had called the world itself into existence. This explains as well that astonishing fact that in the face of their martyrdoms early Christians did not so much confess a belief in the resurrection but a belief in him who had created all things visible and invisible. The utterly free and unconstrained will of God to create manifests a gracious and loving God whose proper work is to give life and all the things necessary to secure and to support that life.

The *creatio ex nihilo* is, therefore, a confession that God is such a God that he gives and supports life willingly, freely, that is, graciously, from himself alone. As the Wisdom of Solomon had already put it: God made all things to exist (1:14); he had made man “unto incorruptibility” (2:23).<sup>15</sup> Irenaeus put this view into classic Christian form: “In the beginning God formed Adam, not as if he was in need of man, but that he might have someone upon whom to confer his benefits.”<sup>16</sup> Luther, as we have noted, understood God’s sovereignty to reside in his power to create. It is not surprising, then, that Luther easily relates God’s power with God’s goodness: “You see that God has created all things by his goodness (*bonitate*) and has ordered all things for goodness and utility . . . so that in all things both his power and his goodness may be highly esteemed (*magnificetur*).”<sup>17</sup>

It deserves to be made explicit that the doctrine of creation from nothing makes God Sovereign and Servant from the beginning and in such a way that God’s sovereignty is placed precisely in his servanthood. God’s will for us exists in his giving of good gifts, of life and all that is necessary to support and to sustain it. He who from all eternity was alone and possessed all things, willed to give gifts of his manifold goodness to that which is nothing and possesses nothing. In sum, he who is Lord of all is the Servant of all. The configuration of God’s creating wherein he who possesses all things bestows freely upon that which is and has nothing is no different from the configuration of the gospel itself whereby the Father, without merit or worthiness in us, yet freely, graciously, gives us himself in the person of his Son.

It was on this basis that Irenaeus argued against the dualism of Marcion who believed that the God who saves was another

God than the one who creates. Salvation unto eternal life in the resurrection of the dead, argued Irenaeus, is the bringing to completion of the creation wherein God began to give good gifts to men. It is not incidental that in his explanation to the First Article of the Creed Luther too speaks the language of the gospel. To believe that God is the Creator is to believe that God has made me and all creatures and gives daily all that is required to maintain my life, and that this he does “out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.” Similarly, in his great Confession of 1528 Luther summarizes the doctrine of the “divine majesty,” that is, of the Holy Trinity, in words taken from the doctrine of creation: “These are the three persons and one God who has given himself to us all wholly and completely, with all that he is and has.” Luther then continues: “The Father gives himself to us, with heaven and earth and all the creatures, in order that they may serve us and benefit us.”<sup>18</sup>

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***The doctrine of the creatio ex nihilo establishes first and foremost that God is omnipotently free in his relation to the world.***

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The doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo*, therefore, establishes first and foremost that God is omnipotently free in his relation to the world and that this all-powerful freedom manifests itself and subsists in the gracious will to give and to sustain existence and life. God’s sovereignty does not lie in some sort of abstract transcendence that absents God from the world. Rather, God’s sovereignty exists and is known precisely in his creating, that is, in his gracious giving of good gifts to his creatures. As Lord he is Servant.

The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, however, also establishes what is the nature of the creature in its relation with God. In his instructive and helpful book *Maker of Heaven and Earth*, Langdon Gilkey gives three implications of the *ex nihilo* doctrine that have had enormous significance for Christian understanding of creaturely existence. First of all, creaturely existence is intelligible and purposive in itself because its source and origin lie in the will of God. Combined with this is the apprehension that all creatures are dependent for their existence on that which is outside themselves. No creature possesses self-sufficiency but is by nature transient and contingent. Unless held in existence by another, the creature dies. Second, since all creatures have their existence only as a gift, nothing in creation is worthy of man’s ultimate worship and allegiance. The doctrine of creation is the basis for the Scriptures’ pervasive resistance to all idolatries. Finally, since God is the source of all that exists, no creature or aspect of creation is intrinsically evil. All things may be used for good purposes even as they may, given sin, be used for evil purposes. Nonetheless, the doctrine of creation provides for a human freedom over against the things of the world, and—importantly—it lays the basis for our belief that no evil is beyond repentance and forgiveness.<sup>19</sup>

These three points are certainly significant and indeed have played important roles within Christian theology and the development of those cultures most influenced by Christian thought. I would like to address more specifically, however, what it means to confess that God is the Creator, and to do that we must focus more centrally on the human person in the world, that is, on that human person who lives in the particular concretions that make up his life. If God the Creator relates to us as the Highest Will who freely, that is, by grace gives all things to us, then man is pre-eminently the one who receives his life and all that constitutes it from God. As the one who possesses nothing in himself and therefore can give nothing to himself, man's natural relationship to God is receptivity, that is, faith. Man as pure creature trusts God perfectly and completely, for he receives all things that make up his life and perceiving in them the en clothed creating presence of the good Creator, he accepts them as good gifts.

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*It is as difficult to confess that God is the Creator as it is to confess that God will raise up the dead on the last day.*

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To confess that God is the Creator, however, is not merely to recognize that God providentially cares for the world and all that lives within it. It is also to acknowledge that "I" am a creature and that God is creating and preserving my life precisely in and through those things that constitute and make up my concrete existence. Especially in his explanations to the First Article of the Creed, the Fourth Commandment, and the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, Luther gives lists of those things in and through which God is Creator for me. What especially characterizes these lists is the broad, comprehensive scope of those things that Luther understands to constitute and support our individual, particular, and personal existence. Not only those things that individuals confront directly each day, such as family, work, food, and clothing, but also the whole range of social, international, and even cosmic arrangements are understood as supporting "my" life. When explaining the promise attached to the Fourth Commandment—that one should obey parents and masters so that one may live long on the earth—Luther notes that "long life" means "not merely to grow old but to have everything that pertains to long life—health, wife and child, livelihood, peace, good government, and the like, without which this life can neither be heartily enjoyed nor long endure."<sup>20</sup> Especially in his catechisms Luther makes clear that all those arrangements that order human life, from the smallest and simplest to the largest and most complex, are God's creative activity for the preservation of "my" life. To confess God as Creator, therefore, is to receive these as blessings with thanksgiving and not to disdain them or attempt to bring them to ruin.

This, of course, all seems well and good until we actually have to receive these things and live with them as good gifts from the good Creator. For it is not by sight that we see in our wasting

bodies the vehicles of life; nor is it by sight that we perceive in a government not of our liking, or in a wayward child, or in a complaining wife, or in a negligent husband, or in an unwanted child, the very masks under which God the good Creator comes to us to give us life and to sustain it. In the reception of these things the "pure fatherly, divine goodness and mercy" of God for which it is our duty "to thank and praise, to serve and obey him" is not readily apparent. Here we must take seriously the comment of Edmund Schlink in his *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions* that it is as difficult to confess that God is the Creator as it is to confess that God will raise up the dead on the last day.<sup>21</sup> What does it mean for a blind man to confess Luther's explanation of the First Article, that God has made me and has given me my eyes and still preserves them? What does it mean for one who is mentally ill to confess that God has given reason and all senses and still preserves them? What it means—easier said than done—is faith, the posture of life that receives all things as from the hand of him who creates from nothing, that is, blesses through that which is without its own intrinsic worth and merit. As such, to confess that God is our good Creator in the midst of our own death and corruption or in the midst of those who hate and abuse us is finally nothing other than to believe that in the crucified Savior God is creating *ex nihilo* by giving life to the unworthy and to those without merit. For as Luther put it, "He is able to build up those who are destroyed, to console the despondent, even in death itself. For because he is God, this is his proper office: to create all things from nothing."<sup>22</sup>

We are, of course, already well within the whole issue of man's vocation in the world. But we wish to address a little more the question of man's task in the world. The question of man's vocation begins with God who creates from nothing. We have noted that God creates from nothing precisely in his giving to us our life and all that sustains it. But we have also noted that God's creating from nothing is a creating by will and command. God's will to create is a will to give good gifts to that which is nothing. When Luther says at the beginning of his treatise on the *Magnificat* that God continues unchanged to work even as he did in the beginning when he created from nothing, Luther indicates that when God is Creator he is exercising his vocation. God's vocation determines man's vocation, for when God creates by giving us all that we are and have, he hides himself in the things of our life so that *in* those things we meet God's will and command and are given *therein* our own proper work and task.

The will of God for our lives is not, so to speak, imposed upon us as a legalism from the outside. The will of God is given to us in, with, and under that life which God has given to us and in fact is ours. The demands of God are implicit in the creation itself. Each human person is given a time and a place. He is set within the world and within a particular society of human persons. It is in this context and in no other that man is called to live out his life, that is, to exercise the vocation that is God's own, to give what we are and have for the benefit of the neighbor. As God gives all things that support our life, so man too is to be ordered to the needs of his neighbor. Similarly, as God is faithful as the good Creator and never ceases to give good gifts to men, so too man is to be constant in his own service of love and charity toward the neighbor.

In this context Luther often speaks of man as the coworker and cooperator of God. As God creates “out of nothing,” so too does the person who as God’s coworker lives his life within the demands of his life. “Vocation and the man who fulfills it are used as tools and means for God’s continuing creation, which occurs ‘out of nothing,’ that is, under vocation’s cross.”<sup>23</sup> In this context as well, Luther often speaks of the necessity for constancy and faithfulness in our various vocations. As God faithfully and without surcease continues to give his good gifts even to the sinner

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*If we cannot proclaim the gospel to the actual lives lived in our midst, it will be lost as another snakeoil, which, to be sure, has its buyers but is finally not satisfying.*

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and the unjust, so we too are to continue faithfully in our various vocations toward those whom God has given us to serve, even if they are unjust and troublesome. Indeed, the creation *ex nihilo* forms a way of thinking that allows Luther to see in all useful human work the good hand of the good Creator, so that no work

is intrinsically more valuable or more meritorious than any other work. “If you do not have as much as the burgomaster, do you not rather have God the Creator of heaven and earth, Christ and prayer? Yes, the emperor does not have more. Remain in your station in life, be it high or low, and continue in your vocation.”<sup>24</sup>

This is a word for our day. For at a time when yuppie, upwardly mobile occupations are advertised as the best means for human fulfillment; at a time when gender warriors advance their cease-fire proposals in the form of denials that the concrete particularities of maleness and femaleness have any intrinsic meaning and significance; at a time when the gift of a child is too often experienced and regarded as an alien imposition and an intrusion; at a time when human persons flee at will from the place and time in which God calls them to serve vocations as spouse and parent; at a time when religious entrepreneurs, TV evangelists, and assorted spiritual hacks give vent to the view that God is especially present in the extra-ordinary moments of ecstasy and escape, it might just be time—and I am suggesting that it is time—for the church once more to place the doctrine of creation at the center of its theological interest, reflection, and preaching. For the gospel to be good news “for me,” it cannot merely be confined to my inward parts, nor can it be thrust into the “not yet” of a future moment. The gospel must be for the “me” who actually lives in the flesh and among others in the flesh who make up the moments of my life. If we cannot proclaim the gospel to the actual lives lived in our midst, it will be lost as another snakeoil, which, to be sure, has its buyers but is finally not satisfying. LOGIA

#### NOTES

1. Galen, *De usu partium* 11.14. For Galen and his views, see R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), pp. 11–13, 23–37.

2. For example, Plato, *Timaeus* 30A: “For God, wishing that all things should be good and not evil to the extent that it was possible, took over all that was visible, that which was not at rest but in a discordant and disordered motion, and brought order out of disorder, thinking that the one was better than the other.”

3. Quite typical is Plutarch: “For creation does not take place out of what does not exist at all but rather out of what is in an improper or unfulfilled state, as in the case of a house or a garment or a statue. For the state that things were in before the creation of the ordered world (*kosmos*) may be characterized as ‘lack of order’ (*akosmia*).” From *On the Creation of the Soul in the Timaeus* 1014B, quoted by John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism from 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977), p. 207.

4. A good example of the Greek view is Pseudo-Aristotle, whose god is much more distant than the demiurge of Plato but is nonetheless the cause of the world’s order. Pseudo-Aristotle (*De mundo* 5) extols the harmony of the world that is made of disparate and opposite elements. He concludes that “harmony is the preserver of the cosmos which is the parent of all things and the most beautiful of all. . . . And everything that is beautiful takes its name from this, and all that is well-arranged; for it is called “well-ordered” (κεκοσμησθαι) after this “universal order’ (κόσμος).” This order finally “keeps the whole system safe, eternally incorruptible.”

5. Lucretius, *De nat. rerum* 1.160: “Nothing can ever be created by divine power out of nothing. The reason why all mortals are so gripped by fear is that they see all sorts of things happening on the earth and in the sky with no discernible cause, and these they attribute to the will of a god. Accordingly, when we have seen that nothing can be created out of nothing, we shall have then a clearer picture of the path ahead, the problem of how things are created and occasioned without the aid of the gods.” Lucretius here adduces the classic Greek axiom that “nothing comes from nothing,” an axiom directly countered by the early Christian *creatio ex nihilo* doctrine.

6. In 2 Mc 7 a Jewish mother is exhorting her seven sons to remain constant unto death in the face of cruel martyrdom under the Greek rulers of Antioch. She refers to the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and then exhorts her sons to “know that God did not make them from what already existed.” This language may only mean that God made something that previously did not exist. See Gerhard May, *Schoepfung aus dem Nichts. Die Entstehung der Lehre von der creatio ex nihilo (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 48)* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), pp. 6–8. May refers to Xenophon, *Memorabilia* II.2.3, where very similar language simply means the procreation of children by their parents.

7. Wisdom 11:17: the “all-powerful hand” of God created the world “out of formless matter.”

8. For example, Justin Martyr, *I Apologia* 59.1.

9. Tatian, *Oratio* 5.3. See May, *Schoepfung aus dem Nichts*, p. 153.

10. Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* 2.4: “But if God is uncreated and matter is uncreated, then according to the Platonists God is not the Maker of the universe, and as far as they are concerned the unique sovereignty of God is not demonstrated. . . . The power of God is revealed by his making whatever He wishes out of the non-existent, just as the ability to give life and motion belongs to no one but God alone.” In *Ad Autolyicum* 1.4 Theophilus states the *creatio ex nihilo* view explicitly: “God made everything out of what did not exist, bringing it into existence.”

11. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 4.20.1: *ipse a semetipso substantiam creaturarum et exemplum factorum et figuram in mundo ornamentorum accipiens*.

12. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 2.10.4. Also *Adv. Haer.* 4.11.2: “And in this respect God differs from man, that God indeed makes, but man is made” (*quoniam Deus quidem facit, homo autem fit*).

13. WA 39<sup>2</sup>:340, 20: *solus est et solus ex nihilo fecit omnia*.

14. WA 18:636, 27–29: *sequitur nunc, liberum arbitrium esse plane divinum nomen, nec ulli posse competere quam soli divinae maiestati* (“it follows that free will is clearly a divine name, since it is not suitable to any other than to the divine majesty alone”).

15. Wisdom of Solomon 1:14.

16. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 4.14.1.

17. WA 14:101, 24–27. Luther is commenting on the words of

Genesis 1 that God saw that the things he created were “good.” Luther simply identifies this goodness with the Holy Spirit, “who vivifies, maintains, and preserves all things” (WA 14:101.26; 100, 37).

18. WA 26:505, 38 ff.

19. Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of Creation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959, 1965), pp. 55–58. For a modern discussion of the freedom of the creature in view of the creation from nothing, see Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 1–61.

20. LC I, 134 (Tappert, p. 383).

21. Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), pp. 58 f. “The more we know Jesus Christ the more we shall know God the Creator also. As we do not know Christ without the cross, so we do not know the Creator without the cross. To be asked to believe in the Creator is as offensive as to believe in the cross of Christ” (p. 59).

22. WA 40<sup>3</sup>:90, 9 f: *potest edificare destructos, erigere et consolari tristes, et in ipsa morte. Et eius officium proprium, quia est deus: ex nihilo omnia*. See also WA 40<sup>3</sup>:90, 25 ff; 39<sup>1</sup>:470, 1 ff.

23. Gustav Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 130. Wingren’s treatment of Luther’s understanding of vocation is especially helpful in relating God as Creator to the life of the cross.

24. WA 7:547.

# The Christian Philosophy and the Christian Religion

MARTIN R. NOLAND



In 1950 Concordia Publishing House published *From Luther to Kierkegaard*, written by the brilliant and inimitable Jaroslav Pelikan.<sup>1</sup> In this book Pelikan argued that the Lutheran Church had adopted the obsolete philosophy of Aristotelianism through the influence of Philip Melancthon. The church had become entrenched in this way of thinking through Melancthon's students and their Formula of Concord. Since Aristotle was already obsolete in the sixteenth century, it behooved the Lutheran Church to adopt a philosophy more representative of modern forms of thought. Pelikan's answer to the challenge of modernity was the philosopher Kierkegaard, whom he believed to be the closest of all modern thinkers to Luther.

Pelikan's book opened the floodgates to the acceptance of modern philosophy, modern theology, and historical-criticism in the seminaries and colleges of the Missouri Synod. Through much turmoil and pain, the majority of the synod's congregations rejected Pelikan's strategy to change the doctrine of the synod. After the Seminex walkout, the synod reaffirmed that the doctrine of its founding fathers was, in fact, the true Christian philosophy,<sup>2</sup> as taught by Luther and his epigones, and as confessed in the *Book of Concord*.

In 1988 the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod published *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance*, written by David Luecke, graduate and professor of Fuller Theological Seminary.<sup>3</sup> In this book Luecke argued that the American Lutheran churches had adopted the obsolete culture of the European "village church."<sup>4</sup> They had become entrenched in this *modus operandi* through the continued influx of peasant immigrants, up until the early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Since the "village church" was already obsolete in the nineteenth century, it behooved the Lutheran Church to adopt an "Evangelical" culture<sup>6</sup> more representative of modern forms of church life.<sup>7</sup> Luecke's answer to the challenge of modernity was the teaching of the Church Growth Movement,<sup>8</sup> which he believed to have the best answers to the challenge posed by numerical decline in church membership.<sup>9</sup>

Luecke's book opened the floodgates to the acceptance of Church Growth, Evangelical worship, and secular methods of

marketing and manipulation in the congregations and bureaucracies of the Missouri Synod. Those in the Synod who agreed with Luecke's strategy succeeded in evicting or reassigning their most formidable opponents, namely, the former president and current faculty at the Fort Wayne seminary. It remains to be seen what the majority of the synod's congregations will do about the challenge posed to the Christian religion by its malcontents.

The term *religion* is used here in its older sense, that is, a set of sacred rites and practices commonly practiced by a community of faith. The fact that the term *religion* is rarely used in this way in modern English indicates that we are held captive to a world-view of Reformed-Protestant origin. This world-view assumes that there is no transcendent significance in external actions, rituals, or speech. Of course, such a world-view also rejects the biblical teaching about the sacraments, and must therefore be held in suspicion by all who claim the name Lutheran.

Both Pelikan and Luecke represent movements toward liberalization in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Pelikan represents the liberalization of the Christian *philosophy* and Luecke represents the liberalization of the Christian *religion*. By definition, any church must include both "philosophy" and "religion," that is, both doctrine and practice. The church may be liberalized through either aspect. Those who follow the agenda of liberalization are striving against the primary purpose of the Missouri Synod, which is to "conserve and promote the unity of the true faith."<sup>10</sup>

The decisive error in Luecke and his followers is his false distinction between "style" and "substance." Without this error, Church Growth could be understood as simply the use of sociological methods in the administration of the church, acceptable to Lutherans with certain necessary modifications.<sup>11</sup> But Luecke attacks the heart of the Christian religion when he argues:

For some Lutherans there may be a question whether liturgical worship belongs to their substance. They would resist treating it as style, as implied earlier. But in fact Lutheran worship practice has considerable variance and has had that over the centuries. For Lutherans, substance revolves around beliefs, which are readily identified in the Confessions that define Lutheranism. The Confessions recognize considerable latitude in mat-

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ters of practice and thereby in style. The conceptual term for what is at issue here is “adiaphora”—things that God neither commands nor forbids and that therefore are subject to human judgment.<sup>12</sup>

This paragraph would make a good exercise for seminary and college students interested in theology and philosophy. What is wrong here? There are errors of definition, logic, and fact. The basic argument is that the immutable substance of Lutheranism is its doctrine alone. Issues of practice, which include worship, are argued to be issues of mutable style. The assumption is that worship is made by human hands, therefore it may freely be changed by human hands.

Recently, the Aid Association for Lutherans sponsored and distributed a research report, *Church Membership Initiative [CMI]*, which was based on Luecke’s strategy and erroneous distinction.<sup>13</sup> The report states that there are only two viewpoints about worship “styles”: (1) that Lutheran worship should be preserved because of the value of its tradition (the Anglican view); or (2) that Lutheran worship may be freely changed to suit unbelievers, because only doctrine is immutable (Luecke’s view).<sup>14</sup>

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*Pelikan represents the liberalization of the Christian philosophy and Luecke represents the liberalization of the Christian religion.*

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Why did the authors of this report omit the Lutheran viewpoint on worship? Why did the authors carefully build up various arguments in favor of a variety of worship styles, when their own findings report that worship style is not a reason why people join, or fail to join, a Lutheran congregation?<sup>15</sup> If worship style is not a factor in church growth, then why include such a controversial issue in the *CMI*? The answer is that the *CMI* is a Trojan horse, whose purpose is to overthrow Lutheran worship in the churches.

The Lutheran viewpoint on worship is found in the Lutheran Confessions, particularly in the Augsburg Confession and its Apology. Augustana VII is *prima facie* evidence that Luecke’s and *CMI*’s simplistic distinction between style and substance will not hold an ounce of baptismal water. It states that one of two requirements for church unity is “that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word” (AC VII, 2). The sacraments are not doctrines, but neither are they matters of style, because they are sacred acts instituted by Christ. The stewards of the mysteries who tamper with Christ’s institutions will reap the wrath of the Owner of those institutions.

Augustana VII also states clearly: “It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by

men, should be observed uniformly in all places” (AC VII, 3). At the same place, the Latin reads “human traditions, rites, and ceremonies, instituted by men.” We should observe that the confessional distinction is between things divinely and humanly instituted. Divine institutions may not be changed, at risk of schism, sectarianism, apostasy, and eternal damnation. Human institutions may freely be changed, according to the rule of love. This is the confessional distinction between style and substance.

This brings us to the central question in the debate between those who boost Lutheran worship and those who bash it. The question is: *What is of divine and what is of human institution in worship?* The “bashers” like Luecke and the authors of *CMI* claim that it is all of human institution; therefore they reject and avoid this question like the plague. The “boosters” claim that those aspects and elements in Lutheran worship that comply with biblical precepts are of divine institution; the rest is clearly of human institution.

Is the nature of worship divine or human? According to the Bible, worship is heavenly activity, even when it happens to take place on *terra firma*. Look at Revelation 4 and 5. The apostle John sees into the sanctuary of heaven, where God receives the worship of his creatures. This worship activity includes singing, chanting, perhaps some spoken verses in unison, falling down before God, “casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea,”<sup>16</sup> musical instruments,<sup>17</sup> and incense. The purpose of the creatures’ worship is to bestow thanks “and power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing”<sup>18</sup> unto him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And it all tends to be repetitious!

Why didn’t John see the Lamb-Redeemer in human form? Didn’t John have a higher claim than any human being to having a “personal relationship with Jesus”? John saw the Christ as the Lamb because the essence of worship is the sacrifice of the Son of God. Christ has claim to authority over his kingdom, not by right of dynasty, nor by right of creation, but by right of sacrificial redemption (Rv 5:9). Therefore, his authority is expressed by the objects of sacrifice: the Lamb as a symbolic expression, or the crucifix as a realistic expression. The vision of the Lamb tells us that the essence of worship is sacrifice.

Sacrifice is the subject of the first subsection in Apology XXIV, “The Mass” (Ap XXIV, 16–65). This is the most detailed discussion of the doctrine of worship in the Lutheran Confessions. Melancthon begins by stressing the importance of making distinctions where they already exist, comparing poor dialecticians to incompetent cooks (Ap XXIV, 16). He concurs with the existing distinction between sacrifice and sacrament. A sacrament is a ceremony or act whereby God gives to us the content of the sacramental promise. A sacrifice is a ceremony or act whereby man renders honor to God (Ap XXIV, 18).

Melancthon further divides “sacrifice” into two types. The first type is propitiatory sacrifice, whereby the wrath of God is reconciled or his wrath placated or forgiveness of sins for others is merited. The Old Testament sacrifices indicated and foreshadowed the one, universal propitiation in the sacrifice of God’s Son (Ap XXIV, 19, 21–24). The Roman Church had wrongly taught that the Sacrament of the Altar was a propitiatory sacrifice, comparable to the temple sacrifices in the Old

Testament (Ap XXIV, 9–13, 52–65). Indeed, Luther says that this notion of a propitiatory Mass was the root of all evils in the Roman Church (SA II, 2).

Melanchthon further teaches that the second type of sacrifice is thanksgiving, whereby those who have been reconciled to God show their gratitude for the forgiveness of sins and other blessings (Ap XXIV, 19). In the Old Testament these thanksgiving-sacrifices included the oblation, the drink offering, the thank offering, the first fruits, and the tithes (Ap XXIV, 22). Among the elements of New Testament thanksgiving-sacrifice, Melanchthon lists the proclamation of the Gospel,<sup>19</sup> faith, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, the affliction of the saints, the good works of the saints, ceremonies, praises, and the reception of the Lord's Supper (Ap XXIV, 25–40).

Melanchthon then cites several synonyms for this thanksgiving-sacrifice: spiritual sacrifices, spiritual worship, and worship. He summarizes his discussion of sacrifice in these words:

In short, the worship of the New Testament is spiritual; it is the righteousness of faith in the heart and the fruits of faith. . . . This passage [John 4:23–24] clearly condemns the notion that the sacrifices are valid *ex opere operato*,<sup>20</sup> and it teaches that worship should be in spirit, in faith, and with the heart (Ap XXIV, 27).

This passage is critical for understanding the difference between Romanists, Lutherans, and Calvinists. Romanists have defended the idea that the mere performance of an act of worship, whether or not it is accompanied by faith, is a meritorious work in God's eyes. Their religion is essentially external. Calvinists have defended the idea that the mere presence of faith, whether or not it is accompanied by appropriate acts of worship, is suitable "worship" to God. Their religion is essentially internal. Lutheranism teaches that both internal faith and external worship are necessary together, namely, that faith without the works of worship is dead (SD IV, 15). James, the apostle of faith, teaches the same, when he points to Abraham as an example of faith accompanied by sacrificial worship. Lutherans balance the internal with the external in religion, so that both body and spirit give thanks and praise to their Creator. If either the body or the spirit fails to give God his due, then that portion of man is idolatrous.<sup>21</sup>

One passage in the Lutheran Confessions has frequently been adduced in favor of Luecke's distinction between style and substance, from the Formula of Concord Article X:

The community of God in every locality and every age has authority to change such ceremonies according to circumstances, as it may be most profitable and edifying to the community of God (Ep X, 4).

Paul McCain has given an excellent response to the frequent misuse of this passage.<sup>22</sup> I would like to add a minor point to Pastor McCain's critique, namely, that the term "ceremonies" is defined in the previous paragraph, in the sentence:

Ceremonies or church usages which are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God, but which

have been introduced solely for the sake of good order and the general welfare, are in and for themselves no divine worship or even a part of it (Ep X, 3; cf. SD X, 1–9).

This definition cuts two ways. First, the most obvious is that those aspects and elements of worship that the Scriptures do not command, prohibit, or identify as divine worship are not worship. They might be art, they might be an expression of rational order, they might be sociologically useful, but *they are not worship*. Second, conversely, whatever aspects or elements of worship the Scriptures command, prohibit, or identify as divine worship can never be adiaphora.

Of course, due to time restrictions we cannot put every element of divine worship in every church service. Heaven will give us the luxury of eternal time, so that we will be able to worship God with all the resources he has given us. On the other hand, over the course of time, we are not permitted to neglect any of these aspects or elements of God-given divine worship.<sup>23</sup>

Let us try to narrow this discussion down to its practical focus. What aspects or elements are positively identified in the Lutheran Confessions as being of human institution? Human traditions are specified under Augustana XV as certain holy days, festivals, monastic vows, distinction of foods, and distinction of days. Apology XV specifies the following as of human institution: different seasons, various rites, questions of food or drink, questions in regard to a festival, new moon, sabbath, and fasts.<sup>24</sup>

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### *The phrase "human institutions" essentially refers to fasts and feasts.*

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What aspects or elements are positively identified in the Lutheran Confessions as being of divine institution? As previously noted, Apology XXIV lists the following: the proclamation of the gospel, faith, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, the affliction of the saints, the good works of the saints, ceremonies, praises, and the reception of the Lord's Supper (Ap XXIV, 25–40). In addition, we would have to include holy baptism, the entire Holy Scriptures, the pastoral office, various musical instruments (Ps 150), prayers for the secular authorities (I Tim 2:1–2), teaching, singing, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col 3:16). None of these are optional or adiaphora in divine worship.<sup>25</sup>

We should note that the phrase "human institutions" essentially refers to fasts and feasts. The issue of the day of worship also occurs here, as well as issues of restrictions from certain foods and drink. All of these "human institutions" were hangovers from the Old Testament religion of fasts and feasts, Sabbath, and kosher, or influences from other religions (See Col 2:8–23). "Human institutions" were what the Lutherans rejected in the Roman Church, by means of the latter section of the Augsburg Confession (AC XXII–XXVIII). Therefore, contrary to the

arguments of Luecke and his followers, the vast majority of what Lutherans have traditionally said and done in worship is of divine institution, and indeed part of the “substance” of the Christian religion.

If Luecke and his followers will agree that the above-listed elements and aspects of worship are of divine institution, then they must face this question: What do they consider to be adaphoristic “style”? If by “style” they mean a preset order of various worship elements, that is, a liturgy, the aspect of “order” is also of divine institution.<sup>26</sup> The use of a liturgy is not an adaphoron. Those who want the spirit of worship to be disorderly probably believe that the Holy Spirit is disorderly and irrational, which is the common feeling among American Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and charismatics. Lutherans know otherwise, on the basis of their ordered study of the Bible.

If by “style” Luecke and his followers mean the traditional liturgy of Lutheranism, we will gladly concede, but only if the “liturgical liberals” come up with a better order. A better order would highlight the most important aspects and elements of worship, particularly the sacrifice of God’s Son. It would use the vision of Revelation 4 and 5 as a prototype. It would utilize all of the elements of divine worship over a period of time. It would not disturb the regular worshiper with constant changes in format, which draw attention to details of structure instead of content.<sup>27</sup> It would make this all accessible to the visitor, and under one hour in length.<sup>28</sup>

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***If they are allowed to continue to persecute the defenders of Lutheran worship, the next generation of Lutheran church workers and laymen will not know the Christian religion.***

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If by “style” Luecke and his followers mean the use of classical music forms in worship, the alternative must be carefully considered.<sup>29</sup> If we use “contemporary music,” we must use the music of each generation to be fair and loving to all: flapper-era jazz for those in their late 80s and 90s, swing and blues for those in their 60s and 70s, rock-and-roll for those in their 50s, folk music for those in their 40s, hard rock and disco for those in their 30s, rap and techno-rock for those in their 20s and teens. What usually happens in such situations is that some aging baby-boomer takes control of the worship life in a congregation, and the poor people have to suffer under endless refrains of “Blowing in the Wind.”

In contrast, a child can claim a right to the hymn “Silent Night” as much as a ninety-year-old. This is a practical argument on behalf of musical styles that are inter-generational, that is, classical. Classical music styles (and there are dozens of such styles) do not exclude anyone in the congregation, because they are not identified with one particular generation or sub-culture.

We should also realize that dance music styles, whether classical or contemporary, are not suitable for any divine worship, because such styles are designed to accompany rhythmic body movement, not cognitive texts.<sup>30</sup>

I hope this discussion has made clear that Luecke and his “Church Growth” followers are opposed, if not condemned, by clear teachings of the Lutheran Confessions and the Scriptures. They will not be able to turn to the rule and norm of Lutheranism for a defense of their position. Their only remaining argument is purely one of statistical “success.” The modern “seeker service” has proven that people who are unbelievers, or “Christian-in-name-only,” will show up for purposes of entertainment. This can be in the form of musical concerts, comedy, cabaret, clowns, theater, dance, performance art, movies, or imitations of television show formats.

Does the “seeker service” and its clones bring saving faith into the hearts of the “Christian-in-name-only” and unbelievers? If saving faith needs to express itself in the thanksgiving-sacrifice that is called “divine worship” (SD IV, 10–12), then “seeker services” have proven to be a failure. It all boils down to the chief object of love. A heart in love with itself demands that the self be entertained.<sup>31</sup> A heart in love with God has to sing his praises.

As Bill Hybels<sup>32</sup> has recently discovered, “seeker services” lure the faithful away from the divine worship of God. C. Peter Wagner has recently admitted that the decade of the 1980s was supposed to be the decade of church growth, but it proved to have a net loss in Protestant church membership.<sup>33</sup> This means that all those 1980s mega-churches grew at the expense of smaller churches, which is a phenomenon that used to be called “sheep stealing.”

Most Lutheran congregations will not go to the extreme of creating “seeker services,” but many will be tempted to adopt Luecke’s evangelical “style.” Such “style” is nothing less than the “American Religion,”<sup>34</sup> which is diametrically opposed to the Christian religion. We cannot help but conclude that Luecke, the authors of *CMI*, and their allies are opponents of the Christian religion. If they are allowed to continue in their political and educational stratagems, the religious life of Lutheranism will be worn down until nothing is left. If they are allowed to continue to persecute the defenders of Lutheran worship, the next generation of Lutheran church workers and laymen will not know the Christian religion.

This impoverished future generation may know the Christian philosophy, but they will not practice the Christian religion, as St. Paul prophesies:

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools (Rom 1:21–22).

The starting point on the road to spiritual darkness, idolatry, immorality, and sexual perversion is the failure to honor God as God, or give thanks to him. That is the portentous concern in the debate about the Christian religion. LOGIA

## NOTES

1. Jaroslav Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950). For a more complete discussion of the movement “From Pelikan to Seminex” may be found in Kurt Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion* (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1977), pp. 108 ff.
2. The term *philosophy* is used here in the wider sense of the term, that is, any system of principles, dogma, or values. As used in this context, *philosophy* is equivalent to the more common term *doctrine*.
3. David S. Luecke, *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance: Facing America’s Mission Challenge* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988). Previous critiques of this book include: John T. Pless, “The Evangelization of Missouri,” *Lutheran Forum* (Pentecost 1989), pp. 30–31; Charles J. Evanson, “Is Luecke Lutheran?” *The Bride of Christ* 25, no. 1 (Advent 1990), pp. 11–13.
4. Luecke, pp. 51–62, 67–69.
5. Luecke, pp. 35, 52–53.
6. The evangelical culture is not as monolithic as Luecke would have us believe. Dr. Robert Webber, Professor of Theology at Wheaton College, is a case in point. He has characterized four cheap substitutes for worship as: (1) the lecture approach, (2) evangelism, (3) entertainment and numbers, and (4) the self-help approach. Robert Webber, “Let’s Put Worship into the Worship Service,” *Christianity Today* 28, vol. 3 (February 17, 1988), p. 52.
7. Luecke, pp. 47–50.
8. Luecke, pp. 4, 11, 50.
9. Luecke, pp. 8–9, 154–155.
10. Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Handbook of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (Saint Louis: Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1992), p. 9 [Constitution III, 1].
11. An example of Church Growth, with emphasis on the sociological perspective, is found in the last chapter of Waldo Werning, *Renewal for the 21st Century Church* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), pp. 147–158. But the same author later completely adopted Luecke’s distinction between style and substance, and used the distinction as a rhetorical weapon; see Waldo Werning, *Making the Missouri Synod Functional Again* (Fort Wayne, IN: Biblical Renewal Publications, 1992), pp. 16–19, 185–202, 274–282, 290–300.
- Excellent critiques of the Church Growth Movement may be found in Kurt Marquart, *Church Growth as Mission Paradigm: A Lutheran Assessment* (Houston: Luther Academy, 1994); Steve Scheiderer, *The Church Growth Movement: A Lutheran Analysis* (Ft Wayne: CTS Press, 1985); Robert J. Koester, *Law and Gospel: Foundation of Lutheran Ministry* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993); Michael Scott Horton, ed., *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1992); Os Guinness and John Seel, eds., *No God but God: Breaking with the Idols of Our Age* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992); Os Guinness, *Dining with the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993); David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993).
12. Luecke, p. 22.
13. Aid Association for Lutherans, *Church Membership Initiative* (Appleton, WI: AAL, 1993), pp. 7–8. This was also republished in the magazine series by Alan Klaas and Cheryl Brown, “LCMS affected by awitch . . .” *The Reporter* 20, no. 5 (May 1994), pp. 1, 4; “Where congregation focuses mission . . .” *The Reporter* 20, no. 6 (June 1994), pp. 1, 4; “Growing churches offer worship variety,” *The Reporter* 20, no. 7 (July 1994), pp. 1, 10; “Growing congregations have ignitor events,” *The Reporter* 20, no. 8 (August 1994), pp. 1, 15.
14. *Church Membership Initiative*, Narrative Summary, pp. 7–8.
15. *CMI*, Research Summary of Findings, pp. 16–17 [219].
16. A line from the hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.”
17. The harp in Rv 5:8 and 14:2.
18. A line from Handel’s *Messiah*, in the final chorus, “Worthy Is the Lamb.”
19. In the Lutheran Confessions, “Gospel” means all of the New Testament, unless it is used in opposition to the “Law,” or otherwise clearly defined.
20. That is, the performance of a good work, ceremony, or Sacrament, without faith in the heart. The Lutheran rejection of *ex opere operato* is not a measure of piety, but a condemnation of works and worship performed by those who do not believe at all in what they are doing.
21. *Idolatry* is here understood in the sense of the sin of omission under the First, Second, and Third Commandments.
22. See Paul McCain, “Resourcing the Resource,” *LOGIA* 3 (January 1994), pp. 73–5.
23. This points to one possible deficiency in traditional Lutheran worship practices, namely, the restriction of the reading of the New Testament in worship to the lectionary. Admittedly, the old common lectionary utilizes the most important portions of the counsel of God, but it is not the whole counsel of God. The Lutheran understanding of the term “Gospel,” that is, the entire canonical New Testament, should direct future lectionary planners to include the entire New Testament over a course of time, without violating the time limits previously mentioned. Old Testament lessons could be limited to those that directly or indirectly refer to the chief articles of the faith.
24. Ap XV, 38–42 does address the issue of worship rites, but it does not specifically distinguish between divine and human elements in that worship.
25. These lists of divine and human elements do not pretend to be comprehensive, but they can begin to move us in the right direction.
26. 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40. These passages about “decency and order” are frequently used as an argument for constitutional order, when, in fact, they are a command for liturgical order.
27. It is my personal opinion that printing the entire liturgy in the bulletin every Sunday is not worth the tons of beautiful, oxygenating trees they consume. The regular worshiper and visitors from other congregations do not need it reprinted every Sunday. The occasional worshiper can follow the order in the hymnbook without too much difficulty, if the liturgist sticks to the book and does not use parochial in-house rituals. Save a forest; use the hymnbook!

28. Such a prescription should give pause to those who enjoy criticizing the editors of the major Lutheran hymnals. After considering the editors' herculean task, we have to admit that they did an amazingly good job. Because of the labor involved, the best hymnals are careful improvements of previous hymnals, just as the most beautiful cathedrals were built and furnished over a period of several generations. Each generation stands on the shoulders of its predecessor.

29. The choice of instrument to be used in divine worship is an adiaphoron, and a matter of practical considerations. For a variety of reasons, the keyboard is the foundational instrument. It leads the melody voice of the congregation better than any other instrument. Guitars cannot lead the melody, and solo instruments do so poorly. The organ is the least expensive way to obtain musical variety in worship, thus the best instrument from a practical standpoint.

30. This has been emphasized by Professor Daniel Reuning of Fort Wayne, with his distinction between Dionysian and Apollonian music. Dance music in worship was as abominable to Moses as the Golden Calf itself; see Ex 32:19.

31. This particular criticism of Church Growth and "seeker services" is found even among secular observers, see Richard N. Ostling, "The Church Search," *Time* (April 5, 1993), pp. 44-49.

32. Pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, Illinois. Hybels's discovery came in the form of a severe reprimand to his congregation of "true believers" sometime in 1993. His words were passed on to me by one of his faithful and admiring members.

33. Ken Sidey, "Church Growth Fine Tunes Its Formulas," *Christianity Today* (June 24, 1991), pp. 45-47.

34. See the devastating critique of evangelicalism in Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992). A more accessible critique of evangelicalism is Harold L. Senkbeil, "A Lutheran Look at the 'Evangelicals,'" *Lutheran Witness* 110, no. 2 (February 1991), pp. 1-3. The sympathy for Evangelicalism in the Missouri Synod may be gauged by the letters to the editor in response to this article in *Lutheran Witness*: 110, no. 5 (May 1991), pp. 18-19; 110, no. 7 (July 1991), p. 18.

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## A CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

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# COLLOQUIUM FRATRUM

“Through the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren . . .”

Smalcald Articles III/IV



## FOLLOWING DR. MARVA DAWN'S LORD

In the Reformation issue of *LOGIA*, Pastor Andrew Dimit reviewed two of Dr. Marva Dawn's books. He ended with a statement that cannot stand without contradiction. His closing statement was: “Perhaps, after all, Ms. Dawn would like me to leave my church and forsake my Lord, in order to join her church and follow her Lord.”

I have exchanged letters with Pastor Dimit. In my letter to him I stated,

For a book review to contain the suggestion that Marva is a non-Christian, that she follows a different “lord” other than the precious Lord Jesus who has sustained her with so much strength during her faith and health battles, is completely inaccurate and inappropriate, an unloving, cruel, and sarcastic statement, in my opinion.

In Pastor Dimit's response to my letter he defended his review, ending with this statement: “Ms. Dawn is the one who wrote books devoid of the gospel of forgiveness, so she shouldn't take offense to them being named as such.”

I urge the readers of *LOGIA* to be fair to Dr. Dawn by reading the books that were reviewed so that they can answer for themselves if she follows a different Lord than they follow. Permit me to share a few quotations from *The Hilarity of Community*.

We experience glad Hilarity in the sure knowledge that we are loved by God, as manifested in the past by God's creation of us and in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Our present Hilarity is made possible by the empowering indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Our Hilarity is heightened when we look forward confidently to the wild ecstasy that will be ours at the end of time when all suffering is finished and we experience the eternal, incredible Joy of face-to-face communion with God (Preface, p. x).

Relationships that float around on the surface deny the reality of God's gutsy love, a love so full that it compelled Christ to suffer depths of degradation and cruel crucifixion to demonstrate it to us (Preface, p. xv).

Though we have blown it, we need not despair. Forgiveness gives us new hope. Though from a human perspective our offerings are anything but pleasing as a sacrifice and far from holy in the way we live, yet God receives them as such when we respond to his love in our worship. All kinds of things spoil our offering—nasty words, cruel actions, judgmental thoughts, selfish failures, manipulative insensitivities, proud stubbornnesses. What a great Hilarity it creates in our lives when, for all these errors, Christ offers forgiveness and removes the condemnation (p. 22).

In the same way, we who are God's people are set apart as special vessels for his purposes. That does not mean, of course, that we are better than anyone else. Pride has no place when we realize how often we lose our love and the Hilarity that motivates it. However, we do understand what distinguishes us from those who do not believe—not our success at acting more holy, but God's loving forgiveness which sets us apart as holy (p. 23).

Yet the Hilarity of our faith is this hope: in his perfect love Christ forgives us. He makes our communities holy in God's sight (p. 24).

Dr. Dawn's Lord surely sounds like my Lord. What about you?

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# REVIEWS

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

Martin Luther



## Review Essay

*Rechtfertigung und Schöpfung in der Theologie Werner Elerts.* By Sigurjón Arni Eyjólfsson. Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus: Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums, NF 10, 1994. 267 pages.

■ Werner Elert was probably the most significant Lutheran theologian of the twentieth century. His was a decidedly confessional Lutheran theology that was addressed to the problems of the twentieth century. Although his work is of deep interest to Lutherans in America, there are very few guides to his theology. Therefore, the appearance of this book as a reliable introduction to the theology of Werner Elert is an event of great importance.

The purpose of this review-essay is threefold. First, it is to serve as a normal book review, which is to announce the appearance of a new book and to evaluate its contents. Second, because Elert was a very creative writer and developed his own terminology, this essay is intended as a reference work for those who will read the book, by introducing some of his more important concepts and supplying English equivalents for some of his German terms. Third, since many theological students today cannot read scientific German, the essay aims to present a brief synopsis of Elert's system in order to help fill an unfortunate gap in the English literature.

This study on justification and creation in the theology of Elert, published in 1994, is by Sigurjón Arni Eyjólfsson, a Lutheran pastor from Iceland, written as a theological dissertation under Prof. Eberhard Wölfel and submitted to the University of Kiel for the doctorate in 1991. It is the eighth dissertation on Werner Elert and the first one successfully to present his true system. Eyjólfsson gives the reader a masterly synthesis of the theology of the Erlangen giant.

### THE STRUCTURE OF EYJÓLFSSON'S BOOK

The book is divided into four principal parts.

(1) “The Location of Elert's Theology” (pp. 13–43) briefly presents his biography and “theological homeland,” his roots in the Old-Lutheran Church of Prussia and in Erlangen theology. This is followed by a discussion of his controversies with Karl Barth and with the German Christians. The opening part concludes with a

critical analysis of previous interpretations of Elert (Krötke, Duensing, Owen, Wolf, Mildenerger, Joest, Langemeyer, Thiemann, Wiebering, Austad, Peters, Hauber). Of these, only Hauber tried to interpret Elert's theology in its own context rather than on the basis of foreign contexts, such as Barthianism.

(2) “The Law of God” (pp. 44–143) presents the most difficult part of Elert's thought. First the author presents God's law as the order of life that moves through creation, and then the law as God's order of death.

(3) “The Gospel” (pp. 144–201) presents, in order, Elert's view of Christ as Mediator, the doctrine of the atonement, and justification.

(4) “The Opening up of Creation” (pp. 202–246) discusses the implications of redemption within the world as God's creation. The book concludes with a diagram of Elert's theology (p. 246).

Eyjólfsson points out that Elert comprehensively covered dogmatics and ethics three times: he gave a combined approach to both disciplines in his outline of doctrine, 1924–26, he presented dogmatics in the first volume and ethics in the second volume of his *Morphologie* in 1931, and then he reached his culmination in the dogmatics and ethics texts of 1940 and 1949, respectively. He developed the same theological system in his shorter works and journal articles. With great skill, the author gathers the leading points of Elert's theology from all his works into a coherent unity.

### The Location of Elert's Theology

Elert published about four thousand pages; the author seems to have mastered all the books as well as Elert's two dissertations (DPhil and DTheol), his sermons, and various articles that appeared in journals and church papers. He describes each of Elert's major works, starting with *Der Kampf um das Christentum*, 1921, a brilliant study in the theology of the nineteenth century, which won him his call to Erlangen in 1923. Next followed the first edition of *Die Lehre des Luthertums in Abriss* (1924), which appeared in an enlarged edition in 1926 (the first edition translated into English by Charles Jacobs). His most famous work was *Morphologie des Luthertums* (1931–32), 2 volumes (vol. 1 translated into English by Walter Hansen). His dogmatics, *Der christliche Glaube*, followed in 1940 (translated into English and partly published by Martin Bertram, Walter Bouman, and Rudolph Norden), and his ethics, *Das christliche Ethos*, in 1949 (translated into English by Carl Schindler). After

this, he turned his attention toward writing a great history of dogma, a project halted by his death on November 21, 1954. Out of his knowledge of the early church he published his *Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche, hauptsächlich des Ostens* in 1954 (translated by Norman Nagel). After his death, *Der Ausgang der altkirchlichen Christologie* was published in 1957, edited by Wilhelm Maurer and Elisabeth Bergsträßer.

### The Law of God

Elert rejected the threefold use of the law taught in seventeenth-century Lutheranism, namely, civil, theological, and moral. Luther had taught that the principle use of the law was to uncover sin and disclose the wrath of God against the sinner (*usus proprius, theologicus seu paedagogicus*); a secondary use of the law for Luther was to keep mankind outwardly under control (“*äußerlich im Zaum*”), a civil or political use. Like Luther, Elert recognized only the theological use, which condemns sin, and the political use, which protects law and public order. Elert spoke of these three functions of the law: the creational aspect (*Seinsgefüge*), the legislative aspect (*Sollgefüge*), and the judgmental aspect (*Qualitätsgefüge*). The first deals with our lives as governed by the conditions under which we were created (see *Schicksal* below). The second or legislative deals mainly with the Decalogue, with commandments and prohibitions. The third is the judicatory function, the law as it examines the “quality” of our lives and condemns our sins.

The noncommittal individual tries to maintain a middle position toward God and his law, *das Mittelpunktsdasein*, in which he himself instead of God is the measure of all things (p. 89), from which position he confronts and questions the law (*die fragende Haltung*) and tries to avoid its demands by a state of detachment (p. 94). The futility of seeking to maintain a middle position over against the law is emphasized by the orders of creation as *Seinsgefüge*, that is, as factors in one’s life that come from one’s having been created and that place a person within certain orders and situations that he must accept and over which he has no control. The person in the middle is also subject to the legislative character of the law (*Sollgefüge*) as expressed in the Decalogue; God’s law makes certain demands of a person’s behavior whether he likes it or not. And the law further challenges the middle position, (*Mittelpunktsdasein*) when it examines one’s moral quality and exposes his sin (*Qualitätsgefüge*).

An important concept in the thought of Elert is *Schicksal*. It should be said immediately that this does not mean blind fate. *Schicksal* comes from the verb *schicken*, meaning “to send,” and refers to conditions that have been sent or given us. These are matters over which one has no control, such as one’s gender, family, stature, physical appearance, natural abilities, race, and other inherited factors. Elert developed these “givens,” orders, and situations very thoroughly in his book *Christian Ethos*.

The natural orders (*Seinsgefüge*) played an important role in Elert’s ethics; these were chiefly marriage and the family, political authority, and spiritual authority. Karl Barth and some of his followers, who rejected a theology of creation or any natural knowledge of God, unjustifiably castigated Elert’s doctrine of natural orders. In an excursus on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Eyjólfsson points out that Bonhoeffer developed a position that was very close to Elert’s in his “doctrine of mandates” (pp. 73–74). Bonhoeffer rec-

ognized four divinely commanded mandates: vocation, marriage, government, and church, and added the changeable orders of folk, race, class, masses, society, nation, fatherland, *Reich*, and others. Important parallels from Paul Althaus and Emil Brunner could also be added.

### The Gospel

Elert listed two important aspects of the gospel: it is a report about salvation through Jesus Christ (demonstrative), and it is a proclamation to the individual (adhortative). Hence the gospel not only imparts information, but it also establishes a new relationship between the individual and God (p. 144–146). “Out of the demonstrative, ‘God was in Christ and reconciled the world unto himself,’ comes the adhortative, in which the readers are called to apply this report unto themselves” (p. 148). Elert criticized dialectical theology for its one-sided emphasis upon the otherliness of God; thereby an infinite distance was placed between the word of revelation and the preached word. This overemphasized the gospel as adhortative and neglected the history of Jesus Christ as demonstrative. Such a separation of report and promise harms the gospel (p. 145).

Elert held that the principle of biblical interpretation is law and gospel (p. 151). Historical-critical methodology cannot open the true meaning of the Scriptures because it remains under the law. In a manner reminiscent of Martin Kähler, Elert distinguished *Geschichte* as higher criticism (law) and *Historie* as the witness of the apostles (gospel). Not the law but the gospel, which is accessible only to faith, provides the key to the Scriptures (p. 152). In his dogmatics, his ethics, and his work on history of dogma, Elert distinguished the portrait of Christ (*Christusbild*) of the four gospels from the dogma of Christ (*Christusdogma*) found in other parts of the Scriptures, as well as in the dogma of the ancient church. The biblical portrait of Christ (*Christusbild*) is the norm for evaluating the doctrine of Christ (*Christusdogma*). The portrait of Christ is the “demonstrative” of the gospel, showing what God has done for us in Christ; through the work of the Holy Ghost it becomes the “adhortative,” which addresses the faith of the believer. The portrait of Christ, which is particularly strong in the passion history, should always predominate in theology and in preaching. In the incarnation God’s Son became integrated into our time and space dimension; in the resurrection the limitations of time and space were removed, and he now lives beyond these dimensions. “The question of how the past can become the present, of how ‘Christ is present to us, can only imply that he, who left our time and space, enters it anew’; and he actually does this in the Holy Ghost” (p. 153).

Elert held to a *theologia crucis*. Unlike some modern theologians who emphasize Easter at the expense of Good Friday, he laid great importance upon the message of the cross and the atonement. Like Luther, he insisted that “Jesus as a man who had placed himself under the law actually took on our flesh and with it the law, wrath, and curse of God, the devil, and hell; thus the curse that he bore was our curse, and the death that he died was our death.” Contrary to Karl Barth and Carl Heinz Ratschow, Elert insisted upon the sinlessness of Jesus. Christ’s sinlessness marked his position with respect to the law: first, he intensified the demands of the law, and second, he claimed the right to judge. And this, Christ’s

freedom in regard to the law, gives him the authority to forgive sin and to set men free from the demands of the law. In this power over the law, Jesus makes himself equal to God and claims that he is the Son of God. These claims of Jesus were acknowledged by God when he raised him from the dead.

The death of Jesus was for his disciples the end of their faith in him as the Son of God. It was first the resurrection as God's action that overcame the 'crisis' of their faith. Through the resurrection the disciples recognized that God himself was at work in that which was done to Jesus Christ, and that God let it be done. The destiny of Jesus first became recognizable through the resurrection. In it, God confirmed the claim of Jesus that he was God's Son (p. 158).

Elert acknowledged the importance of Anselm's contribution to the doctrine of the atonement:

It was the merit of Anselm that he placed the critical importance of the death of Christ in the center of the doctrine of the atonement. 'His basic thought is that the honor of God, injured by rebellious people, demanded satisfaction, and that satisfaction was provided in the death of the God-Man.' The doctrine of the atonement was described by Anselm with the help of legal terms which, Elert held, were adequate for presenting the New Testament doctrine of God as judge, and the related judicature of the law, as well as the nature of justification as a judgmental act (p. 165).

Elert was critical of the doctrine of the threefold office of Christ under concepts taken from the Old Testament: Christ as "prophet, priest, and king." He showed that this construction went back to the Arian church historian Eusebius, that it was introduced by Calvin, and that it was first handled as a discrete doctrine in Lutheran dogmatics by Johann Gerhard in the seventeenth century. Elert offered the following criticisms of this doctrine: First, these Old Testament concepts do not do justice to the multiplicity of Christological attributes in the New Testament, but they lead to an unacceptable reductionism, since they have no place for such terms as "Savior" or "Redeemer." Second, this reductionism leads to the attempt to understand Jesus Christ in Old Testament terms. The New Testament should be understood from Christ rather than from the Old Testament, and the Old Testament must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament instead (p. 162).

Eyjólfsson summarizes the meaning of the law in the atonement:

The comprehensive meaning of the Christ-event is revealed in Jesus' relation to the law. What is decisive for us is that Jesus took on the law in its totality, embracing every earthly relationship as creational, legislative, and judgmental (*als Seins-, Soll- und Qualitätsgefüge*). Only in taking on the law could his destiny receive a cosmic or universal significance, because the law has precisely this significance.

And he cites Elert's dogmatics (p. 341): "The death of Christ according to this is not a simple ending but rather the true completion of his life" (p. 167).

Elert emphasized the use of legal or forensic terms in the New Testament teaching on justification (p. 186). Even if a person could fulfill the law, God would remain the subject and not the object of justification. Elert showed that in Luther's day, "justification" did not mean that a sin was overlooked, but that a sin was judged and punished (pp. 187–189). In his forensic view, Luther avoided trivializing justification by moralizing or else by excusing the sinner (p. 189). In that sense, Elert rejected the position of Karl Holl and built upon Anselm's doctrine of the atonement (pp. 189–190).

Elert rejected the Young Luther's concept of faith as a salutary desperation: "Faith can find nothing in itself, nor can it derive God's judgment as liberation from itself" (p. 193). In his typical pithy style, Elert writes:

God does not cast a person into the misery of guiltiness in order to destroy every thought of merit and to let his own grace appear as a pure gift. God does not need the misery of people in order to be gracious. In such an event, the guiltiness of a person and his despair and deep humiliation toward God's judgment would be the presupposition for grace. In both cases, the grace of God would no longer be conceived as his free action (pp. 193–194).

Elert wrote that the adhortative or direct address of the gospel calls the individual to make the decision of faith. Faith is a decision that the individual cannot make without the Holy Spirit, but it is important that the individual really make a commitment. In his attempt to provide individual responsibility while avoiding synergism, Elert spoke of the person under two separate contexts: the [unconverted] person who is still "in the middle" and has only *das empirische Ich*, an earthly and non-spiritual ego, and *das transzendente Ich*, the totally emptied ego that remains as a receiving ego within the regenerate or spiritual person. The transcendental ego, which is solely the work of God, is the consciousness of the person who has faith; therefore, faith is the work of God in the individual. Only the transcendental ego, which has been effected by God himself, has the power to make the decision of faith (pp. 180–181).

The later Elert was not completely satisfied with the manner in which he had balanced faith as decision and faith as the work of God in his earlier works. Therefore, in his later dogmatics he replaced the word *Entscheidung* ("decision") with the word *Betroffenwerden* ("having been met by"): faith means that I know that God means me with the word of forgiveness and reconciliation. The answer to *Betroffenwerden* is faith, which is the ratification of the adhortative (p. 183).

The transcendental ego is the recipient of justification. Justification itself is fully anchored in the cross of Christ.

An atoning significance can be ascribed only to the death of Christ on the cross. Before God, Christ bore

the curse of the law, he suffered the act of “justification,” he died as the representative of all people, and thereby established peace between men and God. The only possibility for a person to become righteous before God lies in partaking of the “alien” righteousness of Christ. . . . It is decisive for faith that the righteousness here imputed is an alien one: alien righteousness is based *extra nos* [outside us]. This alien righteousness exists of itself, before it is spoken to us. First comes the “alien righteousness” and then the “imputative righteousness.” A person is passive over against righteousness. “Alien righteousness” is his “passive righteousness.” It is identical with the forgiveness of sins. In this connection, Christ is our righteousness. For God, he is simply man. In all things he shares our humanity and God declares a person free in him (p. 196).

Elert took up Luther’s concept of the joyful exchange between the believer and Christ.

For Elert, a complete exchange takes place between Christ and the individual in faith. This exchange is brought about by the Holy Ghost. . . . As seen by man, faith, Christ, and justification are all one. As seen by God, Christ, justification, and the believer are all one. Therefore, God can see Christ when he looks upon us. . . . Becoming one with Christ means the indwelling of Christ within us but not our dissolution in Christ (p. 200).

### The Opening up of Creation

In spite of concern for the environment and related issues, there has been a sad absence of a theology of the First Article. This has been partly because of the veto power against natural theology exercised by Karl Barth. But Elert supplies what is lacking in his theology, which links creation with justification as the new creation.

Aside from faith, there can be no certainty of salvation; faith cannot be separated from either the believer or from its content. Eyjólfsson quotes *Morphologie* 1:78:

The subject of decision is the condemned ego, the transcendental ego, that lives only in faith and from faith in Christ, which without him, however, is subjected to the judgment of death. The decision of faith therefore is between the alternatives of life or death in the strict sense. But the person who would decide in favor of death has thereby destroyed himself or rather does not come to life. But to the person who really accepts the Word of God in Christ, forgiveness applies to him. There is no longer place for a despairing question, for with doubt the accepting ego would be obliterated. The unquestioned applicability of the Gospel is identical with the certainty of faith.

This interdependence of faith, justification, and Christ indicates the context for faith as a decision (p. 206).

God does not reveal himself in revelation; what is revealed is only the encounter with God in law and gospel. Elert distinguished between *Gottes-Kenntnis* and *Gottes-Erkenntnis*. *Kenntnis* is a knowledge without risk and involves keeping one’s distance; *Erkenntnis* demands personal involvement and the renunciation of one’s *Mittelpunktsdasein*, one’s neutrality or sitting in the middle. God removes himself from every attempt to examine him as an object, where one could only stand before the *Deus absconditus*. The attempt to achieve *Kenntnis* of God ends up in only the *Erkenntnis* of the world and leaves one before the law. The revelation in the gospel is the only way to come to the *Erkenntnis* of God. But this demands faith. Therefore, there can only be *Erkenntnis* in faith (p. 211). Out of faith comes the *Erkenntnis* of faith; faith is not the result of *Erkenntnis* but its presupposition. This in turn is always related to Christ. Faith means that I know that God means me with the word of atonement; the promise of justification applies to me. It is given “for you” (p. 212).

“Justification means basically the restoration of the lost image of God in man.” The image of God consists in man’s accountability before God. The restoration of the image therefore means the restoration of accountability before God, and this restores the original relationship between God and man, which takes place by the indwelling of Christ in the believer. The individual becomes justified before God, a *creatio ex nihilo* (p. 215). Thereby, like Christ we come to the fullness of freedom in God.

Justification brings new freedom of the person who is in Christ. In Elert, freedom is always in relation to something else. Otherwise, one would come to the curse of disorientation like Cain; freedom must be in connection with one’s relationship to God.

Christ freed our egocentricity from sin and thereby freed the person in his totality. . . . By the restoration of the image of God, the person participates in the vitality of God, which not only increases one’s own, but finds its goal therein, to let God be “all in all.” In that case, all that remains of the ethical, metaphysical, and aesthetic distance are removed, and our vitality becomes identical with God’s (p. 217).

This freedom can only exist within the context of love. “The freedom of love, to which people have been made free, reflects the relation of freedom and will that God himself has revealed in Jesus Christ. . . . ‘Life in freedom and love is eternal life because it is the life of Christ and the life of God himself’” (p. 218).

For Elert, the freedom of the believer cannot be only freedom from something, but it is always freedom for something: namely, freedom to follow Christ. Because in our relation to the world we are free from the ties [*Bindungen*] of the law, and the world no longer has any power over us, we believers simultaneously enter into a new connection with the ties of the world. Like Christ, the believer is bound to all earthly restrictions, a thing that can also bring suffering. The forgiveness of sins is the freedom of a person from the world in the freedom of following Christ for the world (pp. 218–219).

The Gospel ratifies the demands of the law in that, in the forgiveness of sins, it abolishes the law's demands. . . . The Gospel affects the person in his totality. He is not taken out of the world by his faith, but must carry out his new life in Christ under the world orders, where the law meets him again as the death order. A person is both believer and still sinner . . . The believer lives in the dialectic of law and gospel. He must believe against the reality of the world of the law as the judgment of God. Thereby, faith is always faith against God's revelation in the law, i.e., faith against appearances. . . . God's revelation in the law does not mean primarily that faith here stands against faith, but "God against God. And not God against another god, but the contradiction lies with the God with whom he himself is identical." . . . God remains hidden and removes himself from all knowledge. . . . God gives himself to the believer as love and the one who loves on the basis of the I-Thou relationship. Outside this relation we cannot speak about God's being as love (pp. 219–220).

This love of God is a holy love (*die heilige Liebe*)<sup>1</sup> because holiness is that which is unique in the character of God. "The holy love of God, which meets us in Christ, is that by which the world was created, which bears our I-Thou relationship, and which restores the image in us as the image of Christ" (pp. 222–223). In the early church, Baptism denoted the coming to faith and the separation from the pagan world. In the medieval church, the church as an institution, with its sacraments, replaced the faith-decision of the individual. In both cases, what is lacking is the certainty of salvation "for me." This certainty is found in the Reformation emphasis upon the decision-character of faith (p. 225). Eyjólfsson summarizes:

The problem of the hiddenness of the believer's new being is overcome by Elert in a similar way to the question of the dividedness in God. Both are solved by looking upon Christ. The individual has certainty only in him. . . . The new being enters into an active battle against sin through the indwelling of Christ . . . Battle does not mean cooperation with Christ in the sense of a work, but rather it consists therein, that the person receives forgiveness in faith. . . . The Christian stands in the old Adam under the lordship of sin, but he belongs nevertheless in faith to the lordship of Christ. . . . Faith is never to be taken as a condition but as an act, i.e., it is faith against the law (pp. 226–227).

The book concludes with a survey of Elert's doctrine of the world as God's creation. The "cosmological proofs for the existence of God" are not acceptable because they seek to define the Creator by means of analogies between God and the world. This causality leads to a system of necessity, in which God, seen under the same laws as his creation, is no more than a first cause and a *primus inter pares*, a first among equals. This view is really atheistic and removes the distinction between God and the world. Elert stands critical over against any doctrine of emanation or any views of God as

"first cause" of the world, whether held by Thomas Aquinas, the nominalists, or Kant. These positions all depend upon some form of causality, whereas the New Testament speaks instead of the direct action of God to his creation. God stands over against his creature not as one who is bound but as one who is a free Lord. The world has no inherent right in relation to God, for such an inherent right would limit the authority of God. It receives its existence not from God as "first cause" or even as Creator but from God as Provider. God's relation to the world is described in the New Testament with active rather than passive words. Creation is described with such verbs as "create," "make," "found," and "call," all of which are anthropomorphic attempts to describe God as Creator, which require additional interpretations. Otherwise, we cannot conceive of what creation was like.

The creative word or call of God is not exhausted in the *creatio ex nihilo* but goes forth also in the *creatio continua*, that is, in the creation of the new being in Christ. Even the first man was not created out of nothing but out of the dust of the ground. But the new being in Christ is created *ex nihilo*, just as the voice of God first called the world into being. From this knowledge the believer concludes that this also applies to the world, which also receives its existence from the voice of God, and which was created out of nothing (pp. 229–230).

There are only two views of creation: one coming from the law and one coming from the gospel. One's understanding of the world is the same as one's self-understanding and the question of one's relationship with God. A view of the world coming from the law is one that shows man in the totality of his being, including his reason, as branded by sin. But beyond any natural knowledge of God is that which comes from the revelation and faith. "It is this that assures the person that the Creator and Provider of the world is thy Creator and Provider, that he is thy Father" (pp. 230–231).

The overcoming of sin means the restoration of the natural knowledge of God. Faith enables us once more to recognize the world as God's creation. The full understanding of creation is given only in the Gospel. . . . The way from knowledge of the world to knowledge of creation is given solely in faith. It is first from the experience of justification that a person recognizes that God is his Redeemer and Creator. It is a fatal error to identify Christian faith in God and a natural knowledge of God, or to consider them as fundamentally similar. . . . The believer is not bound to the presuppositions of the law but can consider creation as a free child of God. Such a consideration of the world is already in itself the confession of faith: "I believe that God has made me and all creatures" (pp. 231–232).

The world is 'neutralized' by the Gospel. The shadows of sin that lie over it are themselves now relativized, and the world becomes the incarnation's field for our following after Christ. The world is interpreted as the space for our actions" (p. 233).

Elert handled the problem of the transcendent and immanent God in connection with history, whereby the incarnation was the point of departure. It

was then a logical consequence to handle the presence of God in the world on the basis of the problematics of the Real Presence of Christ in the Supper. Elert presented this on the basis of Luther's controversies with Rome and Zwingli (p. 234).

The bodily presence of God is given in the elements of bread and wine. Here, Elert's purpose is to bring as closely together as possible the relation between the Lord's Supper and the theology of creation. God is perceived only in his action. In the Lord's Supper God binds his presence upon the elements and affirms the world in its concrete existence (p. 239).

The person who had seen himself as the measure of all things (*Mittelpunktsdasein*) is given by the gospel a new measure of all things. This new middle point is Christ, apprehended by faith. And this being redeemed from the plight in which we are our own center is not a once-for-all achievement but a continuous one that needs to be renewed over and over. Especially in suffering this needs to be learned repeatedly. It is the task of the church to point constantly to Christ as our middle point and as the true measure of all things (p. 241).

The worldly orders are the place where the faith of the Christian is to be exercised (p. 243). Love and faith are synonymous. "This love is no private relation between myself and God, but a new order, a new relatedness (*Seinsgefüge*), into which we are all integrated together, with God as the one who is loved as well as the one who loves, as also the brethren, in all cases reciprocatingly. Whoever stands in this order is always both beloved and one who loves." A word about the church is added:

The church is an endowment of Christ, i.e., it is the "out of his atoning death proceeding order of peace between God and men, the order of grace, of redemption and of adoption." The church is thereby a derived order that comes out of the new relation between God and men in Christ (p. 244).

We have surveyed a brilliant interpretation of Elert as presented in a theological dissertation. On the whole, the reviewer applauds the work of Eyjólfsson. There are, however, three points at which he would like to take issue with the author: in regard to his comparison of Elert with Aulén, his comments on *finitum non capax infiniti*, and his assertion that Elert abolished the preaching of the divine law.

(1) Eyjólfsson considers Elert's view of the atonement to have been dependent upon the position of Gustaf Aulén, the Swedish scholar. Two objections must be raised. First, Elert's knowledge of the history of dogma in the early church far outstripped that of Aulén, and he neither needed Aulén's scholarship nor did he follow him. Second, the presentation of the atonement in Elert and in Aulén is diametrically opposed. From the viewpoint of Elert's theology, Aulén separated the atonement from the *theologia crucis* and thereby virtually rejected the atonement (pp. 165–166, 211).

(2) Eyjólfsson seems to say that Elert turned the statement *finitum non capax infiniti* into *finitum infiniti capax* (p. 160). The references he supplies do not support this position. Elert strongly

objected to the application of quantitative terms to the doctrine of God or of Christ. It would be better to present this axiom: God is neither finite nor infinite. He is not to be measured by such material concepts, and least of all by those derived from dualistic philosophy, as is the case with the terms finite and infinite. Elert instead affirmed the radicality of God's becoming man in the incarnation and carried it almost to the point of patripassionism. In his posthumously-published work on dogma in the early church, Elert devastatingly criticized the whole enterprise of pressing theology into Neo-Platonic categories.<sup>2</sup>

(3) That the law should not be preached. In an unusual article in which he called on theology to meet the needs of pastoral *Seelsorge*, "Vordringliche Fragen an die Theologie" (*Luthertum* 1940, pp. 5–15), Elert had strongly criticized the apocalyptic preaching of judgment that characterized the crisis theology of Barth and his followers. In obliterating the distinction between law and gospel, Barth had arrived at an antinomian position that neglected preaching the law to the individual. Instead, Barth and his followers preached an apocalyptic judgment against the entire German nation. Eyjólfsson correctly notes that Elert rejected the notion that the preaching of current events as divine judgment could bring about a national repentance, but from this he wrongly infers that Elert rejected preaching the law. These statements are, at the very least, misleading: "The church does not need to preach the judgment of God because the experience of the law is a universal human experience" (p. 241). "The task of the church is to preach the gospel because the law preaches itself" (p. 242). But preaching judgment and preaching the law are not the same thing. Eyjólfsson cites the essay from 1940 to support this statement: "It is God who casts people into the primal experience of wrath, not the church. Its task is to preach the gospel since the law preaches itself" (p. 242). But this statement overlooks the fact that, for Elert, true preaching is indeed God's word, and preaching of the law is part of his whole counsel that God has committed to preachers.

This is an important problem for Americans, because at one time a group of Elert admirers in our country misinterpreted him as an antinomian and thereby turned some Lutherans against Elert. Elert was no antinomian, but insisted that the preaching of the law was necessary; and his strongest criticism of Barth was that his was an antinomian theology. In his famous essay on law and gospel, which was a refutation of Barth, Elert explained the right preaching of the law, referring to FC SD V, 10, where it says that Christ himself takes the law into his hands and teaches it spiritually.<sup>3</sup> In 1934, Elert had written: "The Law stands in the service of the Gospel. But in order that it may serve this purpose, it must be spoken to us. It must be proclaimed to us just like the Gospel."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Eyjólfsson's interpretation on this point is flawed.

Nevertheless, these criticisms must not distract us from the overall excellence of Eyjólfsson's presentation. This is a very impressive book. Although I knew Elert well and have read many of his publications, I have never before found such a unified treatment of his thought. I admire the talent and the industry by which the author has not only studied the principle works of Elert but has also tracked down the most obscure writings of Elert for his evaluation. Thereby he has provided us with a magnificent panorama of Elert that, in nearly every part, is comprehensive and reliable. The author closes with an interesting and helpful diagram of Elert's

thought (p. 246). This book must be read by all who claim to know Lutheran confessional theology of our time.

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### NOTES

1. Robert C. Schultz differs from Elert on the concept of *heilige Liebe*. Schultz wants to separate the concepts of “holy” and “love” along the lines of the distinction between law and gospel. Love, however, cannot always be equated with gospel, nor need “holy” be connected with “wrath.” The correlates to law and gospel in the divine being are not wrath and *love*, but rather wrath and *mercy*. See Schultz’s excellent study *Gesetz und Evangelium in der lutherischen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 62–97, and especially p. 86 ff.

2. Werner Elert, *Der Ausgang der altkirchlichen Christologie* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1957), pp. 37–43, 260–276, et passim. See also Elert, “Über die Herkunft des Satzes *Finitum infiniti non capax*,” *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie* 16 (1939–40), pp. 500–504.

3. Werner Elert, *Zwischen Gnade und Ungnade* (Munich: Evangelischer Presseverband für Bayern, 1948), pp. 160–161. “Here the law has its necessary and abiding place in the preaching of the church . . .” (*Law and Gospel*, trans. Edward H. Schroeder [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967], p. 36).

4. Werner Elert, *Bekennnis, Blut und Boden* (Leipzig: Dörfeling & Francke, 1934), p. 35.

*Dying to Live: The Power of Forgiveness.* By Harold L. Senkbeil. St. Louis: CPH, 1994. 183 pages. Paper. \$12.99.

■ Here is the answer to the problem of religious junk food. If fire must be fought with fire, then paperbacks must battle paperbacks. Modern addicts to quick fixes, to chatty, personal, anecdotal, “practical” guides to spiritual self-help, will not likely reach for the *Book of Concord*. Nor will they study well-documented treatises in learned journals. If we expect our law/gospel-distinguishing, sacramental, Lutheran piety to capture people’s hearts and minds, then its treasures must be made accessible in popular and winsome form—printed as well as preached! Pastor Senkbeil’s *Dying to Live* is just what is needed. Wide dissemination and heeding of this book hold the promise of genuine renewal in the church.

Senkbeil does not rub his readers’ noses in things “Lutheran” at every turn. And what is the need of that? With the sixteenth-century confessors he is convinced that their doctrine is “both thoroughly evangelical and genuinely catholic,” hence is “nothing more than a summary of what Christians always and everywhere had believed.” With this conviction he simply sets out the treasure of salvation, so that these may work their own attraction upon the reader. Here are sin and grace, the utter centrality and decisiveness of Jesus Christ, God, man, and Savior, the gaping law/gospel contrast, the theology of the cross, the holy means of grace, the Lord’s very body and blood in his blessed Supper, and the dignity of the Christian’s calling. What could be more Lutheran than that?

Despite its easy, conversational style, the book is not a farrago of edifying remarks. It is in fact highly and intelligently structured. Its nine chapters are arranged into three sets of three, leading from the Christian life’s “incarnational foundation” via its “sacramental focus” to its “liturgical shape.” Foundation, focus, shape—the logical progression is flawless.

The sin-and-Savior foundation is of course the best known, most frequently rehearsed part of the story. Senkbeil manages to tell it afresh, by letting sacramental Johannine life/death perspectives predominate, in a way that echoes Luther and the ancient fathers. While not ignoring the manifest decomposition of our public culture, Senkbeil refuses to abet the self-righteous moralism of “religious man”: it is always clear that I and my sin are to blame before God—not society, or economics, or other people’s negligence. Deliverance is pure gift from God in his Son. And in this upside-down world of ours, Life appears and must be embraced in the shape of death. The cross-resurrection dynamic is played out in the daily life of every Christian.

The expressly sacramental language of the first part has already prepared the reader for the “sacramental focus” of the Christian life. Baptism, Absolution, and the Supper of the Lord form the three obvious subdivisions of this second, and central, third of the book. When God acted for the salvation of the world, he did not do it abstractly, generically, “spiritually.” His word was made flesh. People encountered him there or not at all. Just so his accomplished salvation is handed out quite concretely in the external means of his holy gospel (*media salutis*, means of salvation, was the old Latin phrase). To miss out on these is to miss out on him. The means of grace are of a piece with the incarnation. That is why building on Christ necessarily means focusing on his gospel and sacraments. This is not a “high church” option or preference, but the plain New Testament way.

Senkbeil’s seamless weaving together of Christ and his sacraments flies in the face of the conventional wisdom. According to that view, one must first establish a “personal” and experiential “relationship with Jesus.” After that one is well advised to join a church for mutual prodding to “witness.” This sectarian enthusiasm inspires the notion, now propagated also among Lutherans by the survey technique, that since “unchurched people feel good about their faith,” we must accept their self-congratulation and coax them into “congregational participation” on that basis! Contrary to all that, Senkbeil shows us how Christ meets, forgives, quickens, and renews us precisely in his Baptism, Absolution, and Supper—in other words, in his church; for these means alone—wrapped of course in preaching—create, build, and shape the church. The church then is not an afterthought, a further step, even an obligation to be complied with, but is where the Savior chooses to bestow his salvation in the first place, and again and again.

Not that Senkbeil is argumentative about it. His book is after all a devotional guide for life, not a treatise in comparative theology. Yet he shows what happens when the Bible is taken as a rule-book rather than as the Word about life. Waxing disarmingly autobiographical, the author recalls: “I came to see the New Testament . . . not as a ‘do it yourself’ manual for Christian living, but rather [as] the divinely inspired proclamation of what God has done *and continues to do* in his Son, Jesus Christ” (p. 78). And on the next page: “The so-called principles for Christian living so

prevalent in Christian bestsellers and so prominent among Christian media teachers are at best a dim parody of the Christian life presented in the Scriptures.”

Clearly, Senkbeil here wishes to lead us to a higher, not a lower view of sanctification. The point is not a minor one, since modern Lutheran preachers often do not draw the line against antinomianism as bluntly as did Luther himself. The antinomians fancy, he said, that one must never speak like this: “Listen! You want to be a Christian and at the same time remain an adulterer, a whoremonger, a drunken swine, covetous, a usurer, envious, vindictive, malicious, etc.!” Instead they coo: “Listen! Though you are an adulterer, a whoremonger, a miser, or other kind of sinner, if you but believe, you are saved, and you need not fear the law. Christ has fulfilled it all!”

No, says Luther, such people “may be fine Easter preachers, but they are very poor Pentecost preachers, for they do not preach about the sanctification and vivification by the Holy Spirit.” But Christ won for us not only *gratiam*, grace, forgiveness, but also *donum*, or the renewing gift of the Spirit. He who “persists in his evil life, must have a different Christ, that of the Antinomians. . . . He must be damned with this, his new Christ” (*On the Councils and the Church*, AE 41:113–114).

Senkbeil is also a good Pentecost preacher, for he takes the renewing work of the Holy Spirit far more seriously than do the fundamentalist “principles for Christian living.” The truth is, he writes, that “all of the New Testament imperatives are based on its indicatives. In other words, everything God demands of his children he first gives his children” (p. 79). How? “By Holy Baptism the Triune God crucifies our Old Adam, buries our sin, raises us as a new creation, and clothes us in Jesus Christ—thus giving us a whole new life to live. This is the authentic formula for Christian living!”

The chapter on Baptism is shaped by the riches of the Exodus theme. Baptism happens only once, at the beginning. The trouble is that the Old Adam, drowned in Baptism, “swims well” (p. 81). Absolution provides for that constant, repeated forgiveness, which enables us to return to our Baptism daily, ever renewed for the fierce battle unto death between good and evil. “Power of attorney” is one of the many happy phrases Senkbeil coins or applies—in this case to show the divine force of the absolution on the basis of St. John 20:21–23. “Counseling or Consolation?” and “Taking off our Masks” are other headings that hit upon the essence of what happens in confession and absolution.

The Holy Supper likewise receives a rich devotional exposition. “It’s interesting,” remarks Senkbeil, “that the Old Testament models for Baptism and the Lord’s Supper both have a common origin in Israel’s deliverance from bondage in Egypt” (p. 100). As the Red Sea and the Passover miracles triumphed over the same foe, Pharaoh, so “the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Communion are signs and seals of Christ’s victory over one ancient foe, the devil.” The subheading “Feast of Life” reflects the special perspective of St. John 6, in keeping with the council of Ephesus and FC SD VIII, 59, 76.

The interplay of dogma and devotion are vital here. Except for confession and absolution, it is difficult to think of another “chief part” in which the link between Lutheran doctrine and practice is as weak as in the case of the Lord’s Supper. The doctrine

is so “high,” and the practice—since the devastations of pietism and rationalism—so relatively “low.” Given our church’s official sacramental theology, one would expect the Sacrament of the Altar to be much more prominent and decisive in our church life than it actually is. Could this hiatus be the reason why formerly Lutheran churches the world over have drifted almost casually into union with Reformed churches? Instead of warning them against such a wholesale surrender of the Sacrament in the sense of the *Book of Concord*, the “Lutheran” World Federation cannot huff and puff vigorously enough to promote this very betrayal.

Bare catechismal formalities, without a corresponding sacramental piety, will not preserve the Sacrament for our posterity. Even in “conservative” Lutheran churches, the pressures mount daily for making the Sacrament play second fiddle to cultural norms like inclusivism, individualism, consumer-driven “worship,” or “rural values.”

In short, one can hardly overestimate the significance of Senkbeil’s gift for portraying the Holy Sacrament of the Lord’s body and blood in vivid, primary colors, so that our dear Lutheran people may gain a new zeal for these very crown jewels of their church. Surely this is what Luther meant in the Preface to the Small Catechism: “We should so preach that, of their own accord and without any law, the people will desire the sacrament and, as it were, compel us pastors to administer it to them.”

Senkbeil’s text, incidentally, reflects faithfully the two special occurrences of the word “true” in the history of Christian confession: The Nicene Creed confessed Jesus as “true God” (“Incarnational Foundation,” p. 31), and the Lutheran Reformation confessed the Sacrament as his “true Body and Blood” (“Sacramental Focus,” p. 105).

And then there is “The Liturgical Shape,” the final third of the book. Just as “Incarnational Foundation” entails “Sacramental Focus,” so “Sacramental Focus” entails “Liturgical Shape.” Non-liturgical worship is for non-sacramental churches. Given the sacramentality of the gospel and sacraments, their concrete embodiment in public worship necessarily means liturgy. Again, Senkbeil captures this dynamic, and makes it meaningful to the reader. He does not overlook the daily prayer aspect of liturgical life. Already under Baptism much was made of the sign of the cross (pp. 66–68). Later there is more about the part the body plays in worship (pp. 154–156). Inhaling and exhaling are useful analogies for the sacramental and sacrificial elements of worship (pp. 122 ff.). The Psalms are stressed as the God-given fountainhead of public and private prayer (p. 147).

Very important is the final chapter, “Vocation: Liturgical Life in the World.” What has been called “the liturgy after the liturgy” involves every useful occupation, or as Senkbeil puts it, “Butcher, Baker, Candlestick Maker.” He recaptures the Reformation’s stress on the sanctity of temporal life and work, in the family and in society at large: “the Christian always lives outside of himself—in Christ by faith and in the neighbor by love” (p. 177). Without this we succumb again to a sickly new monasticism for clergy or imitation clergy only.

The author of *Dying to Live* is Pastor of Elm Grove Evangelical Lutheran Church, Elm Grove, Wisconsin. This is his second book. He was also vitally involved with the synodical catechism retranslation work a few years ago.

To conclude, one can only hope that Pastor Senkbeil's truly evangelical volume will be widely read. As its vision of the splendor of the divine mysteries of salvation is glimpsed and appropriated by more and more people, we may expect some genuine mission fervor. For it is not techniques and endless "training sessions" that make one a contagious carrier of the Faith, but the simple conviction of the truth, goodness, and beauty of it.

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*Dying to Live: A Study Guide.* By John T. Pless. Naperville, Illinois: LOGIA Books, 1994. Paper. \$1.00.

■ Many Bible studies adequately give the objective facts of the gospel and illustrate how it applies to us, but precious few even mention, let alone teach, how the living Lord is present with us in the Divine Service actually to give us the gifts of the gospel. Many Bible studies refer to the Lutheran Confessions, but precious few clearly present how they confess the truth of the gospel, which deals with the very essence of our lives. *Dying to Live: A Study Guide*, by John T. Pless, is one of the precious few on both counts.

This study guide is a companion to the book *Dying to Live: The Power of Forgiveness* by Harold L. Senkbeil, and "may be used to facilitate the discussion of *Dying to Live: The Power of Forgiveness* in Bible study groups or as a guide for personal study" (p. 7). Both the book and the study guide present a catechesis that is "dependent on three books: the Holy Scriptures, the Small Catechism, and the hymnal. Doctrine is drawn from the sacred Scriptures, confessed in the Small Catechism, and expressed doxologically in the hymnal" (p. 7). The study guide, like the book, works with the incarnational foundation, sacramental focus, and liturgical shape of the Christian life. Its structure is based on the nine chapters of the book. Each chapter of the study contains a series of questions based on a wealth of readings from Scripture. Many of the questions refer the reader to a quote from the Lutheran Confessions, the hymnal, and/or a Lutheran theologian to further one's understanding of the Lord's presence and work among us by means of his word and sacrament.

When I was at the seminary I once asked a professor how to do evangelism. His answer, at first, frustrated me. I was looking for an outline of sorts from him on how I might effectively do evangelism. Not only did he not give me the answer to my question, but by his answer he rejected my premise. He told me to go to the apostle. When I finally got around to looking to Scripture I learned that the apostle was simply faithful in teaching what the Lord was and is doing in and among his people. He didn't do his own evangelism. He didn't do his own liturgy. He didn't do his own class or preach a sermon series on how to live the Christian life. Instead, he confessed how the Lord makes disciples, how the Lord serves his people in the liturgy, how the Lord opens our lips in prayer, and how the Lord lives in us by means of his word and very body and blood to give us life and to bring forth the fruit of good works in our daily lives.

*Dying to Live: A Study Guide*, like the book *Dying to Live: The Power of Forgiveness*, is not a "how-to" Bible study. It faithfully teaches what the Lord is doing in and among his people through his word and sacrament. It confesses how the Lord makes disciples, how the Lord serves his people by means of his word in the liturgy, how the Lord opens our lips in prayer, and how the Lord lives in us by means of his word and very body and blood to give us life and to bring forth the fruit of good works in our daily lives.

I have read the book and used this study guide for my own personal study and edification and am now also using both in a Bible study for the members of the congregation I serve. I highly recommend, without reservation, that you do the same.

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*Worship: Adoration and Action.* Edited by D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House and Carlisle (UK): Paternoster Press, 1993. 256 pages.

■ This is the fifth book in a series edited by D. A. Carson for the World Evangelical Fellowship. For the more traditional liturgical churches the very fact that a collection of essays from the conservative (and by tradition, "anti-liturgical") evangelical wing of the church can be devoted to the subject of worship is a welcome sign. Yet the very title of the collection, where worship is defined as adoration and action, is an accurate summary of the nervousness of these papers, which all seem to apologize to the reader for dealing with something so trivial as forms and ingredients of worship. Worship in Christian tradition is indeed about a whole life offered to God, but once this point has been made it behooves writers to spell out how this is expressed in song, word, confession, and gesture in public worship. Far too many of the contributors seem preoccupied with establishing that worship as an act is only part of Christian life, which really is about action in terms of witness and ethics. Justification by conservative evangelical works seems to be a main concern. Few of the contributors fully engage with the dynamics of acts of worship themselves.

D. A. Carson provides an overview and admits that there are differences of opinion amongst the contributors. Part One has lengthy essays on the theology of worship in the Old Testament (Yoshiaki Hattori) and worship in the New Testament (David Peterson). The latter, a sound but dull essay, stresses the eschatological nature of the Christian life, and the "heavenly" nature of public worship, though it is regrettable that Peterson does not make more of the material scattered in the book of Revelation. It is of course not possible to recreate New Testament forms of worship, and far too many have found liturgical references in the New Testament where there are none; but more could be said of the "new songs" of that apocalyptic book.

Part Two looks at the liturgical usage of certain churches. Klaas Runia surveys the Dutch Reformed tradition. Again, this is a sound essay, but shows no knowledge of more recent scholarship in this area. The same is true of Edward Clowney's essay on Presbyterian worship. The few pages by Roger Beckwith on Anglicanism are

particularly disappointing. He is mainly concerned with Cranmer's Prayer Book of 1549 and 1552, and ignores the creative work in the wider Anglican communion in recent decades. Even more disappointing is the Lutheran contribution by the Norwegian Norvald Yri. This is mainly concerned to stress principles of worship against the Roman position, and in places sounds more Reformed than Lutheran. He plays down the historic Lutheran liturgical tradition, and an opportunity is lost by not mentioning the "Thomas Mass" pioneered by the Finnish Lutheran Church, where traditional liturgy is combined tastefully with more colloquial and ad hoc forms.

The third section looks at worship in some "Free Church" traditions. The English contribution by Peter Lewis is an uninspiring piece, and his assertion that Elizabeth I reintroduced the 1549 Prayer Book is simply incorrect. This essay, however, contrasts with the others in this section, particularly those from Latin America. These latter show awareness of the importance of culture and hint at the need to develop sound Latin American worship, reflecting the culture, and not mere imitations of the worst aspects of North American popular revivalist worship. The essay by Sue Brown on student worship shows considerable sensitivity.

A final essay by Miroslav Volf gives a useful systematic reflection, and suggests that conservative evangelicals have something to learn from Eastern Orthodox worship.

The collection is a sign that worship is being thought about in a more reflective manner in some conservative evangelical circles, and it is hoped it will raise further discussion and work. Those from a more serious liturgical tradition and those who are liturgically literate will find this a frustrating book and at times superficial. For the latter it is a book to borrow rather than to buy.

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***Counseling at the Cross: Using the Power of the Gospel in Christian Counseling.*** By H. Curtis Lyon. Mllwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991. 161 pages.

■ The title of the book says it all. When dealing with troubled consciences and unresolved guilt it is time for the Lutheran pastor to take his parishioner on a "quantum leap." Put the layman in the mental time machine. Do meditative gymnastics and take a trip back to the cross.

Here is the advice given by the author to one counselee who had found it difficult to forgive: "I invited her to come on an imaginary trip through time and space with me. The time was Good Friday, the place Calvary. What did she see? She saw Jesus on the cross" (p. 87). How could this woman continue to keep her forgiving attitude? Answer: "She would keep going back to the cross to remember what Jesus did for her and everyone else" (p. 89). At the end of the book some "techniques" for obtaining resolution are given. Again we have the mental gymnastics of a quantum leap. The pastor tells the counselee, "Come with me in your imagination to where Jesus died. Imagine the cross, the nails, the soldiers and everything. What is Jesus doing there?" (p. 131). In addition, we are given these words: "Because of the personal experiences I have had

seeing gospel resolution at work, I have almost stopped talking about forgiveness by itself. I have replaced the simple words 'You are forgiven' with a trip to the cross and a declaration of redemption that many of the people in the congregation have experienced alone in the office in a counseling session" (pp. 155–156).

That is the essence of the book. The question remains: Is this mental time travel, as the subtitle of the book suggests, the power of the gospel? The answer is quite simply "No!" The gospel is not an abstraction. The gospel is not backward time travel done in the head. The gospel is the actual, located, concrete, delivery of the forgiveness of sins in the present. The pastor and the counselee do not take quantum leaps. We do not go back in time to Calvary. That is impossible both physically and mentally. God does the time travel! He enters our time and space through the Spirit-ed word of the gospel and his holy sacraments. Through the Office of the Holy Ministry Jesus himself delivers the benefits of Calvary and the empty tomb into our ears and mouths (AC IV, V, IX, X, XI, XIII XXV, XXVIII).

This book demonstrates the confusion that reigns in Lutheran parishes (especially in those that consider themselves to be "conservative") in America regarding the forgiveness of sins and how it is bestowed on us. We would do well to hear for the first time or to listen again to father Luther. In *Against the Heavenly Prophets* (1525) he states:

We treat of the forgiveness of sins in two ways. First, how it is achieved and won. Second, how it is distributed and given to us. Christ has achieved it on the cross, it is true. But he has not distributed or given it on the cross. He has not won it in the supper or sacrament. There he has distributed and given it through the Word, as also in the gospel, where it is preached. He has won it once for all on the cross. But the distribution takes place continuously, before and after, from the beginning to the end of the world. . . . *If I now seek the forgiveness of sins, I do not run to the cross, for I will not find it there. Nor must I hold to the suffering of Christ, as Dr. Karlstadt trifles, in knowledge or remembrance, for I will not find it given there either.* But I will find in the sacrament or gospel the word which distributes, presents, offers, and gives to me that forgiveness which was won on the cross (AE 40:213–214, emphasis added).

Therefore Luther has rightly taught that whoever has a bad conscience from his sins should go to the sacrament and obtain comfort. (See also *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, 1528, AE 37:192–193.)

We do not hop into the mental time machine and go back to Calvary. That is the way of Carlstadt. His way is anthropocentric. It runs in the way of the law. There is no certainty there. Were you really there? Did you really take the ultimate trip to the cross? The other option is the gospel way. It is christocentric. Christ does the verbs. He gets the job done. He delivers Calvary to us in the preached gospel, Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and Holy Communion. They are holy because they belong to him. They do what they say. They give the forgiveness of sins. That is certain and sure. That is the gospel.

Instead of trips to the cross we have God's sure work, Holy Baptism. When sins or conscience oppress his parishioner, the Lutheran pastor will lead his sheep to appreciate and use baptism rightly by retorting: "But I am baptized! And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life" (LC IV, 44). Instead of quantum leaps to Calvary we have God's certain work, Holy Absolution. In the stead and by the command of the Lord Jesus Christ the Lutheran pastor forgives sins. That absolution is God's own voice from heaven (SC V, AC XXV). It is the authoritative pardoning word of Christ himself in the present, not an abstract assurance of forgiveness that happened a long time ago. The absolution gives what it says in the present by the authority of Christ himself (Jn 20:19–23; Luke 10:16; Matt 9:1–8). The absolution spoken by the pastor to the penitent contains simple words. But they are the Lord's words. His word is Spirit and life (Jn 6:63). The absolution is the saving voice of Christ in the congregation's midst. Instead of time travel to the cross we have God's unmistakable work, Holy Communion. The risen Lord Jesus invades our time and space and he speaks. He speaks loud and clear. "This is my body, given for you. This is my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." His words bestow what they say. In the Supper Calvary gets delivered to you and for you by Christ himself.

That is the way of the gospel. It has the power to do what it says. That is pastoral care in the way that the Lord has given it. That is the way AC V confesses it: "To obtain such faith [justifying faith] God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel." That way is certain. That way is sure. That way, sad to say, is lacking in this book.

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*Are All Christians Ministers?* By John N. Collins. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992. 168 pages. Paper.

■ Reading this book is rather like watching a great movie with a bad ending. Indeed, the surprise held by the closing pages is so great as to lead the redaction critic in this reviewer to wonder whether it could be the work of another, sinister hand. One would like to say that this is a very important book, for the research and arguments give evidence of brilliant analysis, engaging and enlightened argument, and the methodical destruction of so many hallowed but misguided truisms. Therefore the denouement is truly fascinating, not to mention tragic. Lop off the closing arguments and one has a splendid piece of work. But alas, for we cannot allow even an abundance of sound argument to give an author carte blanche to go and say whatever he wants to say about anything.

Are all Christians ministers? No, Collins declares emphatically. The arguments he puts forward are persuasive and sound. Drawing not only on the New Testament usage of *diakonia* and its cognates, but as well on an abundance of pertinent data from

the Greek world of literature and discourse, Collins builds an impressive wall of defense for his contention that a minister/*diakonos*, in common and biblical discourse, was not merely a reference to a servant or someone who was "helping" in some way. Rather, he shows convincingly, in every case the minister/*diakonos* is a delegate from one party to another, someone sent on what he likes to term a "sacred mission." He then brings the reader to understand that the application of the term *ministry* to St. Paul's office is derived from the office's essential nature as a delegation from God, namely, that St. Paul's ministry "placed him in an immediate connection with the sphere of the divine and required him to extend the influence of that sphere among as many as might be open to the grace of its illumination" (p. 62). The importance of this insight cannot be overestimated, for it provides strong support for an understanding of the ministry as extension and continuation of the idea contained in apostleship, even if Collins has not himself made the connection.

Much of Collins's argument is structured around a masterfully laid case for a reconsideration of the Ephesians 4:11–12 passage so often used to define *diakonia*. First he traces the history of a "Copernican change" in understanding of "ministry" in recent years, from something once understood as being done to or for the people of God to something now understood as being done by them. Complaining that "from a purely linguistic point of view we are not justified in making this revolutionary shift in the way we think about ministry" (p. 34), Collins lays much of the blame for the paradigm shift to the omission in recent years of "the fractious comma" in the critical Ephesians passage. The 1946 edition of the RSV reads as follows:

And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

The comma after "saints" follows the lead of most English translations up to that time. But by the time of the 1971 edition of the RSV, the comma is omitted, representative of virtually all modern translations, thus changing the entire thrust of the passage. Now it is made instead to support the "idea of a general ministry of all Christians," which, Collins contends, is a "thoroughly modern view." Today the passage *sans* comma is routinely invoked in support of the common notion of ministry by all the saints, ministry into which baptism is their ordination.

Collins methodically destroys this notion. He bombards it first with a myriad of exegetical demonstrations of the term's New Testament usage congruent with the former position, and then from the perspective of extra-biblical Greek usage, leaving it finally in ruins. This careful research and recovery of the meaning of "ministry" is long overdue and altogether welcome, even if this reviewer would have liked to hear a bit more about the importance of seeing God as the sender of the delegate when the term is applied to the preaching office.

Sometimes Collins overstates his case a bit, as when at 2 Corinthians 9:1 he translates the attributive adjunct τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους referentially, as referring to ministry for the saints

(rather than as ministry *to* the saints), which allows him to see the saints in this case as the subject rather than the object of his commissioning (p. 61). Though he contends that the explanation why this is so “is simple,” this reviewer remains unconvinced. It seems his stress on the idea of delegation has lent itself a bit too easily in places to the notion of *congregational* delegation, which while applicable in some limited cases (as Collins has shown), cannot be extended without warrant.

Still, the epilogue is as unexpected as an ex-wife at a wedding. Suddenly the author breaks into a stream of acknowledgment of the “need to be at one with fellow believers,” “communal experiments,” the facilitating of “small local groups of Christians” as the “basic Christian activity” (with concession to the possibility that the Eucharist may well remain somehow “central”), the admission that “my family belongs to one” such group, and the bold declaration that

all such groups seek God in the company of their gatherings, and individuals seek it in the group very often because they have no experience of encountering God or their fellow Christians in their institutional worship (pp. 151–153).

Wherever, we are inclined to wonder, did all of this come from, and how in the world does it follow from all that preceded it herein?

One prior indication that the book might take such a reckless turn came in the rather abrupt suggestion that “of itself ministry did not possess authority but . . . transferred authority to those being ministered to.” This non-sequitur was based, however, on the sound assertion that ministry was “not coercive,” being able to change lives “only in so far as it opened believers to the summons of the gospel” (p. 134). Hence, Collins’s conclusion that “ultimately the authority of ministry rests with those who are not ministers” (p. 135) is a deft but forbidden twist of the conclusion logic would have allowed, namely, that the *intended results* of ministry may be said to rest with those who are not ministers. The result is a reversal of the delegated direction of the minister, as clearly as a replacement of “ministry toward” with “ministry from.” We should perhaps have been more suspicious of the early anomalous suggestion that “what the church declares to be ministry is ministry” (p. 65).

The epilogue’s surprise was, however, only faintly forecast by such logical lapses. Notwithstanding these, this book is well worth careful attention for its valuable contributions to the issue.

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***Battling for the Modern Mind: A Beginner’s Chesterton.*** By Thomas C. Peters. St. Louis: CPH, 1994. 176 pages. Paper. \$15.95.

■ G. K. Chesterton, after C. S. Lewis, may be the most indispensable of twentieth-century apologists for Christianity. In fact, Chesterton’s writings helped C. S. Lewis come to faith and served as a model for Lewis’s own apologetic style. Both writers combine

lucid logic, scintillating imagination, and devastating wit to lampoon the absurdities of modern thought and to defend the truth of orthodox Christianity. Both are masters of a prose style that entertains as it instructs, making their theological explorations as enjoyable to read as a good novel. Not only did Chesterton teach Lewis how to write, but the qualities that most people like in Lewis exist in even greater abundance in Chesterton.

Yet Chesterton is not as accessible as Lewis. A prolific journalist who lived from 1874–1936, Chesterton scattered his insights through more than ninety books. He expressed his ideas in essays, novels, plays, poetry, and literary criticism. Instead of writing only about explicitly religious issues, he took on politics, economics, and current events. One difficulty in reading Chesterton today is that his writing is so topical, so filled with references to the controversies of his own day. (Imagine listening to Rush Limbaugh seventy years later.) Chesterton’s barbs at George Bernard Shaw and his attacks on British Imperialism and the Boer War are priceless and contain universal applications; but although his ideas are still startlingly relevant, many of his foes are long-vanquished and thus obscure. There is God’s plenty in the works of Chesterton, but one needs a guide.

This is exactly what Thomas C. Peters gives us in *Battling for the Modern Mind: A Beginner’s Chesterton*, a new volume in the Concordia Scholarship Today series from CPH. The book is not a heavy-duty scholarly analysis; rather, as the author frankly explains, it is a popular sketch of Chesterton’s ideas and a survey of his writings designed to help contemporary Christians read Chesterton for themselves.

Here we see Chesterton’s classic and irrefutable arguments for original sin (the only doctrine that can be empirically proven) and for transcendent, objective morality (without which the quest for “progress” is impossible). There is a chapter on Chesterton’s sense of humor and an incisive analysis of how he would turn back the objections to Christianity against his opponents (showing how secularism, not Christianity, is limiting and narrow-minded).

As someone who is already a Chesterton fan, I found Peters’s explanations of Chesterton’s political and economic theories particularly helpful in illuminating themes from his works that I never really understood before. I have long enjoyed Chesterton’s more famous books such as *Orthodoxy* and *Everlasting Man*, but Peters put me on to works I knew nothing about, but which now I cannot wait to read (such as Chesterton’s novel *Manalive* and his play *The Surprise*).

Confessional Lutherans might be put off by Chesterton’s Roman Catholicism (though, surprisingly, he did not join the Roman Catholic Church until after he had written some of his most famous works). Chesterton describes the “orthodoxy” that he is defending as simply the truths articulated in the Apostles’ Creed. Still, he is sometimes rather brusque with Protestantism. Peters, however, quotes Chesterton who distinguishes between the “sincere ideals” of the “early Protestants” of the Reformation and the loss of those ideals among “the modern Protestants.” “The genuine Protestant creed is now hardly held by anyone—least of all by Protestants. So completely have they lost faith in it, that they have mostly forgotten what it was.” Confessional Lutherans could certainly agree and in fact might second Chesterton’s critiques of Puritanism and the joyless, anti-intellectual, legalistic Protestantism

that somehow arrived in the wake of Luther's theology of freedom from the law. In fact, Chesterton is somewhat like Luther, not only in his Lutheresque physique, but in the way he embraces paradox as a theological method and in the *joie de vivre* with which he approaches the Christian life.

Chesterton may be simply defending "orthodoxy," the world view of the Apostles' Creed, but he is also making a fresh contribution of his own to the Christian tradition. At the center of all of his writings is a sense of wonder at simply existing, at the miracle of the physical universe and the sheer joy of just being alive. He celebrates ordinary people, reserving his scorn for the snobbish and the bored, the self-obsessed philosophers who think that existence is meaningless, and the impotent intellectuals who whine that life is not worth living. Chesterton exults in the world of matter. In doing so, he is cultivating what Charles Williams has called "The Way of Affirmation," the Christian tradition that stresses God's presence in the physical realm.

Thus Chesterton is at his best when writing about the creation (against both the evolutionists and the present-day gnostics) and the incarnation (against those who prefer their God vague and ethereal, thus rejecting the God who has come in the flesh). It is little wonder that Chesterton came to embrace the sacramental spirituality of the Roman Church. Confessional Lutherans, however—for whom the creation, incarnation, and sacraments are no less important—will find him a major ally in making their case to the contemporary mind.

Although Chesterton died six decades ago, and despite his topical focus, his thought is in many ways more relevant now than ever. He remains an almost untapped resource for contemporary Christians. This book, easy-to-read and full of quotations from the "good parts" of Chesterton's writings, will help readers discover another C. S. Lewis.

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***Not of This World: The Life and Teaching of Fr. Seraphim Rose.*** By Monk Damascene Christensen. PO Box 1656, Forestville, CA: Fr. Seraphim Rose Foundation, 1993. Paper. \$24.95.

***Becoming Orthodox: A Journey to the Ancient Christian Faith.*** Revised and updated. Edited by Peter E. Gillquist. Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1992. Paper. \$10.95.

***Coming Home: Why Protestant Clergy are Becoming Orthodox.*** Edited by Peter E. Gillquist. Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1992. \$7.95.

***Anglican-Orthodox Pilgrimage.*** Edited by Franklin Billerbeck. Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1993. \$4.50.

***An Introduction to Western Rite Orthodoxy.*** Edited by Fr. Michael Trigg. Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1993. \$2.95.

***Dancing Alone: The Quest for Orthodox Faith in the Age of False Religions.*** By Frank Schaeffer. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994. \$20.00.

■ Following the conversions of large numbers of former mainline and evangelical Protestants to Orthodoxy, as reported in *Chris-*

*tian Century*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and elsewhere in the past half-dozen years, has come a stream of books by discoverers of what, we are often told, is "America's Best-Kept Secret," the Orthodox Church. Herewith a survey of some of these books, with a few observations for Lutherans.

As its publishers evidently hope, judging by their publicity campaign, *Not of This World* just could become a "cult bestseller" with college students and "counterculture" people. (Actually, the publishers are giving away copies to students who write to them.) This biography of Eugene Rose, later Fr. Seraphim Rose (1934–1982), is curiously reminiscent of the "cult" classic of a generation or so ago, Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. It is a quest story, although an inner quest this time, Rose's quest from the mainline Protestantism of his boyhood, through searing experiences with nihilism as a student at Pomona College, the study of Zen at the American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco under Alan Watts, intellectual formation by reading Rene Guenon, a doctor of esoteric tradition, and so at last to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. This church is linked with the underground church in the Soviet Union, rather than the official, Communist-implicated church. (Before his death, Fr. Seraphim chronicled it in the impressive *Russia's Catacomb Saints*.)

Rose and his friend Gleb, like Tolkien's Frodo and his hobbit friends, found wise old leaders who guided them—in Rose's case, to the asceticism and mystical tradition of the Philokalia and its editor St. Paisius Velichkovsky, and of the Optina Monastery elders of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The "strange" languages in this book are not Tolkien's Elvish and Dwarvish, but Russian and Greek: one learns the danger of *prelest*' (spiritual delusion), for example, or the names of liturgical vestments and musical components. Father Seraphim and the few who joined him and Gleb (Father Herman) established the St. Herman of Alaska Monastery and printing press, which continues to print translations of rare Orthodox spiritual and historical books. There is a little of the "outpost in the wilderness" about their remote mountain establishment, like Tolkien's Rivendell. The book is huge, like Tolkien's, a thousand pages, and very readable. Like Tolkien's book, it could appeal, in its element of mysteriousness, ancientness, and wonder (e.g., in its "revelations" about the "aerial toll-houses" the soul must pass after death) to New Age types, while Father Seraphim's warmheartedness and earnestness, and his struggles with the official church hierarchy, will appeal to many others too. Youths damaged by their immersion in the world of rock music and drugs were cared for at the monastery, part of the therapy being the music of Bach. Since his death, Fr. Seraphim's books have, reportedly, been widely read by spiritual seekers in Russia.

Peter Gillquist and his evangelical colleagues searched too, and if their quest was less anguished than Eugene Rose's, it is still enjoyable to see these Campus Crusade folks studying and starting to wonder, not if Augustine, Athanasius, and John Chrysostom were in their church, but if they were in theirs. The seekers had come to doubt that American evangelicalism provided a rule and norm of apostolic Christianity. Seeking catholic religion, they read the fathers, and then they found the church of the fathers in Eastern Orthodoxy. *Becoming Orthodox* tries hard to present the Eastern Church's doctrines of Tradition, Mary, the sacraments, and so on, in a way that will attract evangelicals. Gillquist and company have

been criticized from within Orthodoxy because of this (by *Orthodox Tradition* magazine, an “Old Calendrist” publication). It is true that Gillquist does not really take up the monastic-ascetic element in Orthodoxy, such as the prayer-and-breathing exercises so attractive to New Age readers of an Orthodox classic, *The Way of a Pilgrim*. So far as I have seen, the evangelical converts and the New Age ones haven’t interacted a great deal so far.

Like Gillquist himself, most of the “former Protestant leaders” in *Coming Home* have become Orthodox clergymen. From Calvinism, Wesleyanism, Baptist fundamentalism, Assemblies of God Pentecostalism, and elsewhere, they have come to Orthodoxy, where the spotlight trained on the pastor is turned off, and God works through the sacraments. Typically they sensed there was something missing where they were, read the fathers, compared their findings to the New Testament, and “came home” to Orthodoxy. Perhaps restless Lutheran congregations need to be led—if such a thing can be done—to read the fathers a little themselves, and the New Testament in the light of the ancient church, in order to awaken or refresh their loyalty to liturgy and sacrament.

The two short books, *Anglican-Orthodox Pilgrimage* and *An Introduction to Western Rite Orthodoxy*, which could easily have been combined, address Anglo-Catholic Episcopalians dispossessed of their church by doctrinal waffling at best, apostasy often. Anglicanism’s aesthetics and the apostolic succession through the episcopacy cannot, they find, compensate for the bishops’ officially-stated willingness “to lay aside all claims to the possession of infallible formulations of truth.” One of these priests writes that he longed for a place “where my children’s children would learn the same Faith I had learned”—surely, if we are going to “market” the Lutheran Church, this indicates a “selling point” for churches committed to the Lutheran Confessions. Western Rite Orthodoxy adapts the 1928 Prayer Book liturgy for Orthodox use.

Seraphim Rose impresses the reader by his sincerity, compassion, self-discipline, unconventionality, erudition, and possible prescience, as he warns of totalitarian political and spiritual conquest. Gillquist and his peers, in the Conciliar Press books, exude gratitude for their new church home. The sound of an ax being ground as I read *Dancing Alone*, however, was so loud that I gave up on the book.

The London *Times Literary Supplement* jeered at William Manchester’s *A World Lit Only By Fire*, referring to the book’s “engaging misconceptions . . . set out in the language of breathless overstatement that suits them so well,” and wondered how its “moderately diligent” author “could have come up with this sort of stuff.” Manchester’s book is perhaps Schaeffer’s chief source for the history of medieval and Reformation Europe. His own book is not “engaging” though—it is bad, as far as I got. Schaeffer knows nothing of conciseness. Though the book’s three hundred pages are perhaps twice as many as he needed for what he has written, he writes footnotes that beseech the reader “please” to look up books by Florovsky where support he cannot be troubled to provide will be given for his claims. Often, the fit between footnotes giving quotations and the assertions in the body of the text is not a very snug one. The landmarks indicating the causes of the West’s fast-moving descent towards an Orwellian hell-on-earth are the 1054 schism between the Western and Eastern Churches, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment. Luther, Schaeffer says, acted

in “boundless revolutionary zeal” on behalf of his “unholy anarchy,” fashioning a “chaotic self-created” church. The typical Protestant dogma appears, if Schaeffer were to be our guide, to be double predestination in contrast to the Orthodox truth that “people could use their free will to choose to love God,” worshipping him in order to receive immortality as their reward. He says, oddly, that Five-Point Calvinism is “almost Darwinian,” an example of his readiness to sacrifice clarity of argument for the sake of sound. One can see that Schaeffer has found elements of Christian faith that were missing from his Protestant days (he is, of course, the son of the late Francis Schaeffer); he has come to know that “the sacraments . . . are truth itself in action” (as he might have learned had he read the Lutheran Confessions or Charles Porterfield Krauth’s *Conservative Reformation*).

Reading these accounts by converts to Orthodoxy should renew Lutherans’ loyalty to the “churchly” way of life that Adolf Köberle describes in *The Quest for Holiness* (1936), pp. 202–203. In the manner of Frank Schaeffer, I would ask the reader “please” to read these pages again.

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**Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici***. Translated by J. A. O. Preus. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989.

■ Shortly after the Pittsburgh Convention of the Missouri Synod, I visited my brother Jack at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis. He had suffered a slight stroke just before the convention and had been unable to attend. He was his old jovial self, alert but tired, a state that would mark the rest of his life. He commented briefly on the election of a new president of the Missouri Synod and then nostalgically reverted to personal reminiscences and to an assessment of his own eventful presidency of the Missouri Synod, a subject to which he would often return before his death in August 1994.

We discussed questions such as: How would history regard him? What would be his legacy to the Lutheran Church? What was his major contribution to the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?

Would it be his deft politico-ecclesiastical leadership in a synod enmeshed in doctrinal and personal controversy? Would it be his strong, capable support of missions and his remarkable success in achieving, almost single-handedly and in spite of an obtuse mission board, the preservation, by God’s grace, of a tenuous fellowship of the LCMS with all the overseas sister churches that had so often been diverted from their theology and mission by the politics of a paternalistic and unionistic mission or the gift-bearing advances of the Lutheran World Federation? Would it be the investigation of the theology of the St. Louis Seminary, a bold move that, although it was a policy upheld and practiced by Chemnitz and the other Lutheran confessors (Preface to the *Book of Concord*), was unprecedented in our time, an action that in God’s infinite grace brought the LCMS back to its confessional Lutheran moorings?

No, none of these conspicuous accomplishments would give Jack his name in the history of the Lutheran Church, Jack maintained, but something far less dramatic and notable. Jack would go down in history as the one who translated Martin Chemnitz into English for the Lutheran Church today.

Certainly such was no small achievement. But surely that was not Jack's greatest claim to fame. Jack is too modest, I thought, when he first told me this. Others felt as I did. But Jack was right. He had a keener and longer view of history than others. In his later years while he was continuing his translating of Chemnitz in retirement, he saw what more of us failed to see: much of what he as president had done to restore the Missouri Synod to its faithful Confessional position would not last, just as Chemnitz might have seen the future in the glory days immediately after 1580. He would be remembered by what he wrote, not by what he did. In fact Missouri's advance toward a clear Confessional Lutheranism began to wane after Jack left the presidency. With the enthusiastic, if ineffectual, support of fundamentalists, Evangelicals, modern *Schwaermer*, and pietists, Missouri under Preus had retained the organic principle of her theology, the *sola scriptura*. With the eager support of these same friends as well as crypto-fundamentalists, Evangelicals, modern *Schwaermer*, and pietists in her own ranks, Missouri may well be losing, imperceptively, the material principle of her theology, the *sola fide* and the *sola gratia*, the theology of the cross. Jack saw this happening even in the last term of his presidency. And he spoke of the situation often and tried belatedly to address it. But with little success. The pastors and people, even his strong supporters, did not understand his provident concerns. Attacks against the *solus Christus*, while more serious, are seldom as overt and raucous as those against the *sola scriptura*. After his retirement Jack never tried to interfere in the affairs of his successors to stem the tide. Rather, he did what was more important and fruitful. He finished his legacy to the church he served. He translated the greatest dogmatics book ever written by a Lutheran, the *Loci Theologici* of Martin Chemnitz.

Chemnitz's *Loci Theologici* is an exceptionally important book and was very popular in its day. Based upon the outline of the more brief *Loci Communes* of Melancthon, it was first published in 1591, after Chemnitz's death, and by 1600 had gone through six editions. It is the longest book he wrote. It discusses extensively all the important *loci* (themes) of theology, except the person of Christ and the Lord's Supper, topics that Chemnitz had already written on before. Dogmatics to Chemnitz was a combination of church history (including patristics) and exegesis. Since exegesis was both interpretation and application, a dogmatics book will present both the evangelical doctrine and practice. What we call pastoral theology today was included within dogmatics in those days. Thus Chemnitz's *Loci Theologici* became a popular and useful book in the library of the ordinary pastor. It became a valuable aid in dogmatics, exegesis, pastoral theology, and sermon preparation.

Let me illustrate how Chemnitz's book filled all these functions. His classic treatment of the article of justification put much weight on word studies dealing with all the concepts pertaining to the article of justification, such as faith (knowledge, certainty, trust, and the like), grace (mercy, love, compassion, forgiveness), justification (forgiveness, regeneration) and so on. In fact, the work of Christ (propitiation, reconciliation, salvation, redemption, and related terms) is subsumed under the article of justification. (Accordingly, Chemnitz made justification in this broad sense the integrating, operational *praecipuus locus* in his dogmatics, just as Luther and Melancthon had done before him.) By understanding all these concepts and their relationship to justification, the reader

will understand, appreciate, and be able to apply the doctrine of justification. Chemnitz's word (and concept) studies, while less complete, are as practical and helpful as the exhaustive word studies in Kittel's *Theological Wordbook*. In a sense, they are more so; because Kittel offers only an analytical study of *words*, whereas Chemnitz presents a synthesis of the concepts making up the biblical *doctrine* of justification and other articles of faith.

There is no way to commend adequately Chemnitz's great book today, except to urge the reader who is interested in theology to buy and then read it. Jack's translation is excellent. Chemnitz's inelegant Latin comes into understandable twentieth-century *koine* English. When Jack and I studied Latin at the University of Minnesota years ago, Prof. Ogle, one of the prominent Latinists of the day, warned us emphatically against translating Latin words by English derivatives, which have a way of changing their meanings over the years. Due to his knowledge of the theological content of Chemnitz's writings, Jack realized that in translating theological terms Prof. Ogle's sound and staid rule had to be abandoned rather consistently. This deviation from normal canons of translation makes for great accuracy. The reader is assured that he is reading Chemnitz and not some revisionist paraphrase of Chemnitz. And the reader can read with understanding, which is a mark of a good translation.

But if Jack was right and this translation of Chemnitz is his legacy to the Lutheran Church in America, will this legacy amount to anything? Will our busy pastors bother to read a heavy theological work like Chemnitz's *Loci Theologici*? And will such reading and study among our pastors help their ministry and our Lutheran Church?

I think there is reason for optimism in this regard. I think that our younger pastors especially are getting sick of reading theological tripe, often foisted on them as handouts at conventions or workshops or other such occasions. They want to read solid theology, based on the Bible and our Confessions, not a mishmash of pop psychology, pop sociology, and pop Madison Avenue sales techniques. Not long ago Jack told me with great joy that his translation of Chemnitz's *Two Natures of Christ* had sold over five thousand copies. This indicates the renewed interest among Lutheran pastors in reading classic works on fundamental theological topics. Now the *Loci Theologici*, which covers all the articles of the Christian faith, should be read with the same avidity. And the readers will be rewarded and blessed, and so will the church at large. And Jack will be right. He has left a greater legacy to the Missouri Synod than any president since Francis Pieper.

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**C. F. W. Walther, *American Lutheran Pastoral Theology*.** Translated by John M. Drickamer. New Haven, MO. Christian News. \$7.95.

■ American Lutheran pastors and teachers have had to wait too long for this book to appear in English. In writing the book Walther wanted to apply Lutheran practice to the American culture. That was not an easy task, but with a few exceptions Walther

succeeded admirably. The reader today will find that the book is very practical and helpful, and not out of date.

Why? Because Walther's book is not a "how-to" book for developing skills, not a book advocating strategies and programs, but truly a pastoral *theology*. Walther is concerned with establishing *principles* for preaching, *Seelsorge*, communion practice, sick calls, mission calls, church discipline, and other things. If he does not have sections on such modern themes as stewardship, evangelism, and counseling, he offers more of value on such topics than the spate of paperbacks inundating the book market today.

The first subject for discussion in a Lutheran pastoral theology is the preaching office, the office of pastor, and the call into that office. The pastoral office is not an *adiaphoron*, but is commanded and established by God. God himself calls a man into this office through Christ's church. Every pastor must be certain of this, even as he is certain that he preaches the pure word of God. To Walther the pastoral office must be established before any subject pertaining to pastoral theology can be broached.

Walther stresses the divinity of the call into the Ministry of the Word by quoting copiously from Scripture and Luther. To him Luther is the model pastor. At this point most Lutherans (of all synods) in our country have departed from Walther and Luther. Not only bishops and district presidents and other officials who threaten pastors who try to be confessional, who judge pastors under their jurisdiction by secular, *iure humano* criteria, and occasionally even suspend them from their synodical fellowship and hound them out of their divine call from wrong reasons; not only pastors who do not respect the office of their fellow pastors and those in fellowship with them, who steal their sheep, undermine their ministry, speak against them to their members, and introduce un-Lutheran and divisive practices (open Communion) and worship into their parishes, thus causing offense in the church; but also today the lay people who show no regard for the pastor or his office and selectively hear or ignore the word of God that he is called to preach, who often treat him as a mere employee at will, and sometimes try to oust him by secretly complaining about him to certain in the congregation or to other pastors or officials who are willing to listen—in practice such officials, pastors, and people have lost sight of the divinity of the call.

Sixty years ago my father used to tell me that he didn't believe in the divinity of the call into the public ministry. He did not agree with Walther or Luther or his father and grandfather, who were all pastors. When I asked why, he was wont to reply, "Nobody believes in the divinity of the call any more, not the laymen, not even the officials, not even the pastors themselves. Why should I?" I reckon that many more people would agree with my father's cynical position today than in his day. In his day and Walther's day most Lutherans at least said they believed in the divinity of the call into the ministry and acted that way. Today most Lutherans rarely think about the matter, and the divinity of the call plays little role in the activities or attitudes of pastors or people or officials. Modern textbooks in pastoral theology have in most cases (an exception is *The Shepherd under Christ* by Armin W. Schuetze and Irwin J. Habeck, Northwestern Publishing House, 1989) rather little to say on the subject. I suppose that the call into the public ministry is considered by many today to be little different from the calling of one to be a wife or husband, parent or child or magistrate—

positions in life where God has indeed placed people (what Luther calls *Orden* or *Stand* in his Small Catechism under his "Table of Duties"), and where Christians find themselves. Thus if a congregation does not want its pastor around any more for valid or invalid reasons, we have a former district president of the Missouri Synod devising a liturgical rubric for "The Divine Disposal/Dismissal of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments" with a "Diploma of Revocation" given presumably to the ousted pastor. Such a cavalier approach to a minister in trouble seems not to take the divinity of the call very seriously.

Modern books in pastoral theology and related subjects deal extensively with the attributes and requirements of a pastor or other church workers and the evaluation of the pastor, often according to sociological and psychological standards. Walther does not omit this subject, but focuses more on the things the minister of the gospel is to do according to Scripture, thus emphasizing the glories of the pastoral ministry. What many today might view as failures (unpopularity, criticism, lack of church growth) in the ministry of pastors, Walther, like Luther, views as crosses, *tentations* that inevitably befall the gospel preacher and that, as manifestations of God's chastening love, serve to encourage the faithful pastor rather than to discourage him. In spite of all the troubles that descend upon the pastor, the gospel ministry is a happy and rewarding ministry. In a day when in Protestant, Evangelical, and Lutheran circles there is so much confusion, even among the clergy, about what the pastoral office is or whether there even is a pastoral office at all, Walther's evangelical approach to the pastoral office and calling is most reassuring to all who hold or aspire to the office.

Walther categorically rejects the practice of a temporary call, which had become a common practice and bane among the sects of his day.

Here in America many congregations have the custom of calling the preachers only temporarily. But a congregation is not justified in extending such a call, and a preacher is not authorized to accept such a call. It is an abuse. It fights against the divinity of a correct call to a preaching office in the church, which is clearly testified to in God's Word (Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28; Ps 68:12; Is 41:27).

For if God is really the One who calls preachers, the congregations are only the instruments for separating the persons for the work to which the Lord has called them (Acts 13:1). The preacher stands in God's service and office unless it can be proven that God himself has dismissed him from office (Jer 15:19; see Hos 4:5), in which case the congregation is not really dismissing the preacher but is only carrying out God's clear dismissal . . .

The preacher who gives the congregation the right to call him in this way and to dismiss him arbitrarily is making himself a hireling and servant of men. Such a call is not what God has ordained for the holy preaching office but something quite different that has nothing to do with it. It is not an indirect call from God through the church but rather a human contract. It is not a lifelong call but a temporary function outside the divine ordinance, a human ordinance outside the divine ordinance, a human

ordinance made against God's ordinance, or rather an atrocious disorder. So it is null and void, without any validity. One called in this way is not to be considered a minister of Christ or the church (MS, p. 27).

That Walther took such an uncompromising position may account in part for the fact that his *Pastoral Theology* was not translated into English and published in this country until now. Today it has become more and more common for missionaries, synodical staff people, professors, and others to be given "calls" that are mitigated by contracts that render the call only temporary.

Recently the Committee on Constitutional Matters of the LCMS was asked whether "the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod insist that the name 'Lutheran' be included in the legal name of a congregation before the congregation can be accepted into synodical membership." Apparently, the Board of Directors and others in the Michigan District of the LCMS thought that mission congregations and maybe other congregations would do better in terms of church growth if they were not called Lutheran. With compelling evidence from the constitution and bylaws, the CCM ruled that member congregations belonging to the LCMS are "expected to use the name *Lutheran* in designating their denominational identification." Such an opinion is clearly in accordance with the position of Walther as he and others organized the Missouri Synod. In Lutheran Germany or the Scandinavian countries, a congregation could be named St. Thomas Church, but not in pluralistic and sect-ridden America. Here the congregation must be called St. Thomas Lutheran Church. In America a congregation that will not call itself Lutheran denies its Lutheranism and its faith, according to Walther.

If we are called Lutheran because we believe what Luther taught according to God's Word, and if we can clearly and fully confess our faith only by calling ourselves Lutherans, then we would be ashamed of the truth we have learned if we were ashamed of the Lutheran name. (MS, p. 34)

Walther was well aware of the challenges and also pitfalls facing a confessional synod as it starts new congregations. In our country an orthodox pastor and congregation need a creed, a confession, and in today's world that means a Lutheran confession.

Already in the early church those who wanted to be baptized and accepted into the Christian congregation had to declare publicly that the Apostles' Creed was their confession over against the false teachers and sects which had arisen. So if a congregation wants to be considered orthodox now, it is even more necessary for it to declare that the confession of the orthodox church of this time is its own. Since it cannot be expected that all members know each of the symbolical writings of the Lutheran Church, it is enough that a congregation confess Luther's Catechism and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. . . .

The one called owes it to the congregation to be bound to God's Word and the churchly confession as a guarantee that he will not preach his own wisdom but the pure Christian doctrine. This obligation is a great advan-

tage for the one called in the conduct of his office, for he can appeal to it against the attacks of false spirits that arise in the congregation and so can nip in the bud many unnecessary and harmful disputes. (MS, p. 35)

Walther maintains that there is no situation where a pastor and his congregation are not called upon to confess their faith.

In Church Growth circles within the Missouri Synod, it has been said that creeds are detrimental to church growth, especially for young congregations, and therefore might well be eliminated from our liturgy in some cases. Creeds and formal confessions turn people off, they say. Such a contention, probably concocted long ago by non-creedal revivalists or modern Church Growth entrepreneurs, is both disingenuous and irrelevant. The Lutheran pastor has no choice in this matter. Together with all confessing Lutherans, he must confess his faith, not merely in a positive testimony of his own personal faith (*fides qua creditur*)—the pastor's confession is never merely his private pronouncement—but also in the faith of the church (*fides quae creditur*). This was the case not only in the New Testament (1 Cor 15:3–8, Rom 1:3–4, Rom 8:34, 2 Tim 2:8, Phil 2:11, 1 Tim 3:16, and 1 Pt 3:18–22 are all probably creedal statements or fragments, some liturgical, which were accepted by the early Christian church), but also at the time of the Reformation and today and every day. Formal creeds and confessions are not an *adiaphoron*. Nor is their place in a Lutheran worship service an *adiaphoron*, especially when unchurched people are present. To omit the creed from the regular order of service for the sake of pleasing non-members or some other expediency is a denial of the faith, according to Walther (cf. FC SD X, 10).

There are, however, many customs and rites that are *adiaphora*. Walther lists some of them: pictures, holidays, organ music, chanting, specific liturgies; at baptism: the sign of the cross, the baptismal gown, the exorcism, Christian sponsors, and the like; at the Lord's Supper: unleavened bread in the form of wafers, placing the elements in the mouth, kneeling at the reception; in respect to the pastoral office: vestments, private confession; bowing at the name of Jesus, the pericope system, candles and the crucifix on the altar, as well as others.

It is clear that Walther is trying to address the confused situation that the Lutheran Church faces in America. The Lutheran Church must at all costs retain its identity and confession—and its practice (and liturgy) when it upholds the confession. At the same time church customs and liturgical forms that are *adiaphora* must not be imposed upon the church. Walther approaches this difficult balance from the perspective of FC X. Bold confession is never an *adiaphoron*. If a liturgical custom or rite that is an *adiaphoron* supports the confession (the doctrine of the gospel and all its articles), it should be retained against any and all heterodox pressure from Roman Catholics or Reformed. For instance, the exorcism at baptism was an *adiaphoron*. But when the Calvinists, because of their predestinarian doctrine and their denial of the regenerative power of baptism, rejected the exorcism, the Lutheran Church must retain the rite for the sake of the true confession of the gospel and all its articles.

I think it may be said that Lutherans in general today pay little attention to the issues addressed by FC X and to Walther's sound counsel at this point. Perhaps many do not understand the issues.

Perhaps they are so intent to “get the message out” (President Al Barry) that they do not pay attention to “keep the message straight” (President Al Barry). FC X teaches us that keeping the message (the confession, the gospel) straight is essential to getting the message out. It also teaches us that worship and practice are the integral handmaid of the gospel and confession; and if they are adulterated, the gospel will not be taught in its truth and purity and the confession will be compromised. It also teaches us that in cases of conscience and confession nothing is *adiaphoron*.

Since all this is so, it grieves a confessional Lutheran today to observe Lutheran pastors tinkering with the historic Lutheran liturgy, adding this or omitting that according to their own predilections or at the nod of some Church Growth guru who says, “We’ve got to get rid of the liturgy if we want to grow.” Meanwhile, confession and absolution, a distinctively Lutheran liturgical practice in our sectarian culture, the confession of the ecumenical creeds, and the ancient collects, which articulate the Trinity, are treated as *adiaphora* that can be practiced or omitted without affecting our confession or doctrine or practice. Thus it is quite possible for a Lutheran, like members of non-liturgical and non-creedal churches, to worship Sunday after Sunday without being made explicitly aware of whom he is worshipping, unless some Trinitarian doxology happens to be sung or an occasional reference is made to the Trinity in the sermon. But such hit-and-miss references to the Trinity are hardly what our Athanasian Creed meant when it stated: “And the true Christian faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity.” Walther’s position is clearly this: for an orthodox church to omit the confession of a creed at a worship service, which calls for such a confession, is to forfeit the orthodox Lutheran character of the church.

Walther offers much material not included in modern pastoral theologies. He spends many pages on preaching, which is the first duty of the pastor. He presents briefly a miniature homiletics course with a helpful discussion of law and gospel, emphasizing that the preacher must present real law and real gospel in his sermons. He thoroughly discusses the qualifications of a pastor, the care of the sick and dying, the youth, the care of the needy, burials, congregational meetings (he does not mention voters’ assemblies) and officers (elders, deacons), church constitutions, the personal life of the pastor, the pastor’s membership in a synod, baptism and communion practices, and more. Walther’s treatments of such subjects are helpful and relevant for every pastor today.

A few comments must be made concerning two topics that Walther treats at great length and that are concerns to pastor and congregation also today: Holy Communion and church discipline.

Walther maintains that the pastor as shepherd, bishop, and watchman “has the holy duty to hold those who want to receive the holy Supper to personal announcement in advance and to use it faithfully and wisely for exploration.” His communion practice is strict, according to today’s standards. In spite of all difficulties and misunderstanding, the pastor who believes in the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the sacrament must practice closed communion. His arguments deserve to be quoted.

In whichever church one receives the Holy Supper, one is confessing that church and its doctrine. There cannot be a more inward, brotherly fellowship than that into which

one enters with those in whose fellowship he receives the Holy Supper . . .

There is a big difference between once hearing a sermon with them in a strange church fellowship and participating there in the celebration of the Holy Supper. One might sometimes hear the sermon there, perhaps to become familiar with their doctrine, without participating in the false-believing worship. But the Holy Communion is an act of confession. If one communes in a strange church, one is actually joining it, presenting himself as a witness for its doctrine, and declaring its members to be his brothers and sisters in the faith.

On the basis of that understanding, what is to be thought of inviting everyone present, without distinction, to receive the Holy Supper, and admitting them without examination?—It is quite natural for that to be done by preachers who do not believe that the body and blood of God’s Son is present in the Holy Supper and is received by all communicants; preachers who consider the holy Supper only a memorial meal, a mere ceremony, such as the Reformed, the Methodists, and most of the Union-Evangelicals. But it is inexcusable if those operate this way who want to be Lutheran preachers and are convinced of the truth of the Lutheran doctrine of the Holy Supper (MS p. 112).

Quoting Luther, Walther proceeds to warn of the “horrifying responsibility” that will be the pastor’s on the last day, should he out of fear or to please people admit to the Supper impenitent sinners or members of sects (Ezek 3:17–18).

Again following Luther, Walther advocates a more liberal practice of discipline than one might expect. There are times when excommunication, except for withholding the Sacrament and “other fellowship” (SA III, IX) from impenitent sinners, could not and should not be carried out. Apparently, in Europe from Luther’s to Walther’s day, excommunication was exercised in Lutheran lands all too much by the government, and the preaching was left to the pastors. To Walther in America, as to Luther, excommunication was essentially the imposition of the church’s lesser ban upon one who was impenitent in sinful life or false doctrine. When Walther addresses the greater ban, the final exclusion of the impenitent sinner from the congregation, however, he gets into trouble. In America the government has no authority to enter into the matter. Who then has the authority? The local congregation. Citing theologians from late orthodoxy (John Fecht, John Dannhauer), Walther offers a long list (taken from Dannhauer) of “sins which are subject to church discipline,” discusses who is to be subject to such discipline, and then outlines with care and detail rules to be observed and steps to be taken as the congregation proceeds with evangelical care to excommunicate impenitent sinners. I doubt if the complicated procedure was workable in Walther’s day. It certainly cannot be carried out in our free and undisciplined day. According to Walther excommunication is a matter for the whole congregation, and cannot be imposed by a mere majority of members of the congregation, no matter how large. If just one member “stubbornly” opposes an excommunication, he himself must be subject to church discipline and ultimate excommunication. And

so it goes, like the “unit concept” (and what I would call the resultant “domino theory”) of church fellowship. (You are in church fellowship with someone who is in fellowship with someone who is in fellowship with someone who is a false teacher; therefore I cannot practice church fellowship with you.) Walther’s procedure, evangelically intended, is unworkable, and, if employed consistently, will probably end in a legalistic tangle. It seems to leave the pastor out of the picture and to ignore the lesser ban that the pastor imposes and that is often a step in final excommunication. The procedure is not practiced today.

Walther’s American Lutheran Pastoral Theology is the best book of its kind to have been written in America. It affords much helpful advice on most of the issues that pertain to the pastoral office today. The Lutheran pastor who seriously subscribes our Confessions and wants to carry out a Lutheran practice will derive great benefit from this classic work.

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## BRIEFLY NOTED

*An Anthology of the Sermons of J. Michael Reu.* Two volumes. Edited by Paul I. Johnston. Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 1994. Hardback. Volume 1 (Advent to Easter Cycle), 436 pages. Volume 2 (Pentecost Cycle/Occasional Sermons), 496 pages.

■ Johann Michael Reu (1869–1943) was at home in the libraries and Reformation archives of Germany, producing studies of the Augsburg Confession and Small Catechism that came to be celebrated in both Europe and North America as essential pieces of research. Yet Reu remained close to the people who populated the pews of Lutheran churches scattered across the prairies of Iowa and Illinois. In spite of his heavy teaching load at Wartburg Seminary (Dubuque, Iowa), his many writing projects, and his editorship of a theological journal, he was often in the pulpit. Reu never lost sight of the fact that careful historical and theological scholarship is to be put in the service of the proclamation of the gospel.

Dr. Paul I. Johnston has done us a fine service by collecting and editing *An Anthology of the Sermons of J. Michael Reu*. These sermons and convention essays are more than historical artifacts from a bygone era of American Lutheran history; they are sterling examples of well-crafted, textual sermons that speak with evangelical clarity, confessional integrity, and pastoral warmth to ordinary Lutheran congregations. Contemporary Lutheran preaching could be enriched and strengthened by exposure to these homiletical gems that Dr. Johnston has brought forth from the legacy of a learned and eloquent preacher whose preaching was shaped by his study of Luther.

*Another Gospel: A Confrontation with Liberation Theology.* By Paul C. McGlasson. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994. Paper. 94 pages.

■ This is a passionate tract directed against liberation theology for the sake of the apostolic gospel of Jesus Christ by a Presbyterian professor who lost his teaching post at Eden Seminary for challenging the current “orthodoxies” of mainline liberalism. McGlasson traces the path of liberation theology, concluding that it is an offspring of Karl Barth, noting that Barth’s assertion that Scripture is to be read as a *Bundesgeschichte* (a history of the covenant between God and humanity) reduces salvation to a partnership between God and man, thus providing a theological foundation for the liberationist transformation of the Gospel into a political ideology. According to McGlasson “it was Barth who so fused the law and gospel that he turned the gospel into the law and the law into ideology” (p. 49). This short volume is powerful and profound in its analysis of Karl Barth’s continuing influence as well as in its perceptive critique of liberation theology’s elevation of “the community of faith” over the authority of Holy Scripture.

*The Lifelines of Love.* By Peter M. Kurowski. New Haven, MO: Leader Publishing Company, 1994. Paper. 149 pages.

■ Pastor Kurowski identifies “the lifelines of love” as the gospel purely preached, Holy Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and Holy Absolution, and then sets out to draw on these “lifelines” as God’s own means of sustaining the Christian marriage. The tone of the book is conversational and its content is catechetical. Genuinely evangelical as the author writes not as a counselor but as a servant of the Word.

*Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary.* By Peter Stuhlmacher. Translated by Scott J. Hafemann. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994. Paper. 267 pages.

■ Peter Stuhlmacher is known to English-speaking readers primarily for his work on “righteousness” in the New Testament and his work in hermeneutics. Stuhlmacher articulates three central concerns in his commentary on Romans: (1) The need to interpret Romans in light of the Old Testament and post-biblical Judaism; (2) The righteousness of God and the justification of both Jew and Gentile as the dominant theme of the epistle; and (3) the need to understand Romans against the backdrop of the opposition encountered by the apostle.

*Psalms.* By James L. Mays. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994. Hardback. 457 pages.

■ In keeping with the purpose of the Interpretation Series to offer a set of commentaries that integrates historical-critical scholarship with a theological understanding of the text, James L. Mays of Union Theological Seminary in Richmond has produced a massive commentary on the Psalter, which contends that the psalms “have a double identity” as Scripture and liturgy. Form-critical and historical questions have been made subordinate to a theological and liturgical reading of the psalms. The insights of the church fathers, the Reformers, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer are utilized along with the scholarship of Kraus, Mowinckel, Weiser, Westermann, and von Rad.

# LOGIA Forum

## SHORT STUDIES AND COMMENTARY

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### THE WORD MADE FLESH

“This should be the Christian’s only skill, to learn Christ aright,” Luther said (WA 45:511, 4). This was Ian D. Kingston Siggins’s object in his work *Martin Luther’s Doctrine of Christ*, published in 1970 by Yale University Press. Here we include the opening paragraph (broken into two for our format) from his initial chapter.

St. John, Martin Luther says, is not a Platonist; he is an evangelist (WA 10I/1:227, 18). Luther is scornful of lofty interpretations of the Johannine Prologue borrowed from Neoplatonic philosophy: “St. Augustine says that this Word is an image of all creation and like a bed chamber is full of such images, which are called ‘Ideas,’ according to which each creature was made, every one after its image . . . But this seems unintelligible, obscure, and farfetched to me, a forced interpretation of this passage; for John speaks quite simply and straightforwardly, with no desire to lead us into such fine and subtle reflections” (WA 10I/1:196, 6).

To avoid such speculation is a thorough-going intention with Luther—to such an extent that he abandons the long-standing practice of making “the Logos” the subject of christological statements. Indeed, he rarely uses “the Word” as a christological title outside his expositions of the Prologue and Genesis 1. Needless to say, the doctrine of the written and spoken Word of God is pivotal for Luther, but he does not systematically connect this doctrine with “Christ, the living Word of God” (WA 25:62, 36). There is a very great difference, he argues, between the Word incarnate, that “inner, eternal Word” Who is God substantially, and the external Word, which is God effectively, not substantially

(WA Tr 4, 695:5177; cf. 25:257, 20). The theme “Christ the Word” is therefore infrequent, but where the biblical text does warrant it, Luther’s exposition is fresh, imaginative, and vivid.

### STRAW EPISTLE OR HERMENEUTICAL HAY?

*On the Thursday of Pentecost 16, 1994, those congregated in the Chapel of Sts. Timothy and Titus at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, heard this homily on James 1:17–27 preached by The Reverend Dr. Norman Nagel. The assigned text for chapel services has often followed the previous Sunday’s pericopes as prescribed by the three-year cycle of readings for the church year, one day focusing on the Psalm, another on the Old Testament lesson, another on the Epistle, and so on. This appears to be the case in the following sermon.*

It is no secret that Dr. Luther did have some difficulty with James, and here we are for three Thursdays faced with James. It would be four were it not for the protection afforded us by St. Michael and All Angels. We could recall that the three-year lectionary was basically constructed in Rome. The traditional lectionary had James only twice. Yet one way or another we are stuck with James. Dr. Luther did not throw it out; he could not in any case tell the Lord what he may not do or say, even if that does not fit in with what we figure he ought to do or say. Like it or lump it, he does do and does say what he does do and does say, and there it is. Dr. Franzmann did not dodge the challenge, and he did not waste time finding excuses for Dr. Luther or St. James. He studied the text. There it is. Let’s listen. “Quick to hear [Jas 1:19].” If someone says “Don’t read verses 23 and 24,” they then are, of course, the very ones we surely want to know all about. What’s this business with the mirror?

As heirs to the Western tradition, we are tempted right off to make some observations about mirrors and let that control what the text is saying. That is the way to all sorts of allegorizing nonsense, and that would be a departure from James so gloriously concrete, so gloriously Sermon-on-the-Mount-ish. In the way he thinks and says things, in his *Gedankenwelt*, the use of such a picture or simile is controlled by what that picture or simile is there to serve, to make clearer. When Dr. Luther saw that, we were well on

our way to having the Reformation. The question then is what is running the mirror? This we are told straight and clear. “He who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty.” What does the mirror say? The mirror says/shows what the perfect law, the law of liberty says/shows. Forgetting that is the problem. The core of the problem is the fact that when the law is speaking it’s the Lord God himself who is speaking. That’s how come it’s a perfect law and a law of liberty. To be thus before the Lord, before his Law, is where the mirror puts us; that is the truth point, *coram Deo*. God’s talking.

There are other mirrors whose truth we cannot rely on, as when beauty or ugliness is in the eye of the beholder, some projection of ourselves, our self-image. “Truth is subjective” (Kierkegaard). The mirror that tells us who we really are, the mirror speaking the law of God, which is his speaking, does not just show our face (πρόσωπον), but shows what we really are πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως. (Check the critical apparatus and Kittel.)

The law which runs the mirror is the perfect law, the law of liberty, the holy law of the Lord God himself by which he said and made them his own. “I am the Lord your God.” “You are my people.” That’s what the mirror says. To which there is nothing surer in all the world to say than: “You are the Lord our God.” “We are your people.” The only other alternative is to say, “You are not our God.” “We are not your people.” These are they who go away into forgetfulness and denial, who live as if they had never heard or seen what the Lord said and showed with his law running the mirror. בריה mirror.

This epistle is written to the בריה Twelve Tribes of the Diaspora. Verses 19–25 are the Simeon section, about hearing, from שׁמיע. Verse 26 brings us to Levi, cultus, and so to chapel.

Chapel is a mirror worked by the Lord, for here the Lord has his words mirrored out to you, from outside ourselves. Who you are, how it is with you before God the mirror says, as it says his perfect law, his law of liberty. To forget is to return into the slaveries from which that law delivers us, to return to “not your people.”

The alternative here in James is not between hearing and doing, but between hearing with doing, and hearing, forgetting, not doing. What is heard says how it is. The word of truth—it is with that the Lord made us his own. “He brought us forth by the word of truth.” His words say and deliver what they say. In James the delivery is to the Twelve Tribes of the Diaspora. They live in a continuity with the Old Testament which has not been mucked up by the Judaizers. You can read about that in Galatians.

Sometimes you are in need of Galatians; sometimes of James. Today willy-nilly James. In both it’s *coram Deo* and what the Lord says. The way of his words is the way of words which do and bestow what they say, and they go on being that sort of words as they go into us, so that hearing and doing run together, the heard words are his words and so work the doing. To block the doing is by blocking the doing out of the words. Hearing the words not as doing words, is not to hear the words as words of the Lord, that is to forget that it is the Lord who runs his words, which run the mirror. Those to whom James was writing had loads of the words of the Lord, but as emptied of being the Lord’s words, as taken over and run by them, much to their religious satisfaction. We got the pure doctrine by the tail.

Some say, “We got the doing.” Some say, “We got the hearing.” Paul and James treat different diseases, but toward the same health,

and not by the opposite disease. No allopathy, not alternatives, but what lives only together.

When next you decide not to come to chapel (you have more important things to do), read Galatians. When next you come to chapel, ponder James, at least for two more Thursdays, eager for the doing which our Lord’s words do, heard as his doing words. Amen.

## DOGMA AND PROBABILITY

*Required reading in your editor’s seminary days brought the text Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics to his bookshelf, from whence it was dusted off for this issue. Edited by John Reumann and published by Fortress Press in 1979, it offers material for reviewing one’s perspective these past twenty-five years. Included here is a portion of Kurt Marquart’s essay, found on pages 328–330. One might then follow and compare the hermeneutical history and outcome of the other contributors to this volume.*

“The inevitable result” of the critical division of the biblical materials into fact and fancy, writes R. P. C. Hanson,

is that all the facts might as well be fancy because, while it is agreed that *some* of them are almost certainly facts, nobody can produce any satisfactory reason why his selection should be regarded as facts and not fancy, rather than that one, or that one, or that one. It is not merely that every critic plays the game differently from the others, but that every critic makes his own rules.

This demotion of all historical facts from certainty to probability and hence, from a dogmatic point of view to doubt and uncertainty, is inherent in the critical principle itself, which demands the right to question anything and everything. Let us recall the fourth of the Munich theses cited above:

If exegesis is to be practiced historico-critically, it must use the methods of secular historical science, i.e. *criticism which allows only probable judgments*, and the principles of analogy and correlation (cf. Troeltsch). Thereby it subjects itself in principle to secular-historical judgment. [Emphasis mine.]

The term *criticism* here corresponds to what I have called the “narrow critical principle,” while a rigorous application of the principles of analogy and correlation represents the “wider critical principle.” It is of course in the sense of the wider principle that the thirteenth Munich thesis goes on to formulate as follows:

If historical-critical exegesis subjects its findings to secular-historical judgment, then *the requirement that it be bound to an ecclesiastical teaching office or to confessional writings contradicts its very starting point.*

This applies equally to the narrow critical principle, however, for the critical insistence that all facts are always subject to review and reappraisal cannot be squared with the confessional assertion

that *some* facts are *a priori* certain and settled, namely, by divine authority and revelation.

Krentz has defined the problem admirably: “Historical criticism produces only probable results. It relativises everything. But faith needs certainty.” Apart from a few tiny and ambivalent nibbles at the problem, however, Krentz offers no cogent way out of the dilemma but falls back on Harrisville’s notion of “the true nature of faith.” And that, as we have seen, amounted simply to a retreat from the relevance of the historical facts. Given the priority of the historical-critical commitment, there really is no other choice, for as Gunther Bornkamm put it: “Certainly faith cannot and should not be dependent on the change and uncertainty of historical research.”

This unresolved historical-critical embarrassment has led even to the extraordinary attempt to portray belief in biblical facts as the *fides historica* “which the Book of Concord condemns”! In this view it is wrong to regard as an act of faith the belief that “the incarnation and other events took place”! The Augsburg Confession, however, leaves no doubt about what it teaches on this score: “Here the term ‘faith’ does not signify *merely* knowledge of the history . . . but it signifies faith which believes *not only* the history but *also* the effect of the history, namely, this article of the forgiveness of sins.” Luther’s explanation of the Second Article revels in the gospel’s historicity and speaks of the need for dealing at length in sermons with “such articles as the birth, passion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.” Nor does the Formula of Concord know a dehistoricized gospel. The narrow understanding of gospel versus law presupposes the historical framework of the gospel in the wider sense, that is, the total teaching and narrative, as in Mark 1:1, “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” And, after all, the Lord himself has guaranteed concerning an incident at Bethany that “wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

But does not this very historicity of the gospel invite and validate the use of the historical-critical method? In a word, no. The historicity of the gospel indeed makes it possible to point the inquirer to the factual-historical moorings of the faith—for as Paul said, “these things were not done in a corner” (Acts 26:26; see 1 Cor. 15). It also affords the unbeliever the opportunity to question and challenge the historical evidence in an effort to explain it away. The gospel’s historical “infrastructure,” however, does not entitle the believer, least of all a public teacher in the church, to “keep an open mind,” that is, to cultivate doubt about the correctness of the gospel’s historical framework. One must therefore carefully distinguish between the realms of apologetics and theology proper. In the former realm it suffices to show, as the London University legal authority J. N. D. Anderson does so well, that the New Testament is not a collection of doubtful legends but an impressive documentary record of valid evidence that establishes the Christian case beyond a reasonable doubt. That, however, is totally insufficient and sub-Christian in the area of theology proper, where the lordship of Christ and consequently the truthfulness of Christianity are no longer in dispute but are confessed with the Spirit-given certainty of faith. Before faith the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures may appear simply as venerable old documents; after faith they are seen to be divine, authoritative truth. In apologetics it suffices to say, “This is most likely true.” In theology anything short of “this is

most certainly true” is sacrilege. Hence the narrow critical principle has valid uses in the pre-Christian, pre-evangelical realm, but is intolerable in the realm of gospel-dogma, that is, “the doctrine and . . . all its articles.” For faith cannot live on empirical probabilities but “must have a very definite Word of God.” “Good consciences cry for the truth and proper instruction from God’s Word, and to them death is not as bitter as is doubt in one point.”

A good illustration of the incompatibility of historical criticism with doctrinal confession was the Arnoldshain agreement on the Sacrament, where it was “no longer possible to connect the institution of the Supper with the night in which He was betrayed”! The Lutheran church, by contrast, is convinced that her sacramental teaching “rests on a unique, firm, immovable, and indubitable rock of truth in the words of institution recorded in the holy Word of God and so understood, taught, and transmitted by the holy evangelists and apostles, and by their disciples and hearers in turn.” The critical and the dogmatic attitudes are mutually exclusive. *Tertium non datur*.

Lutherans above all must treasure the incarnational-sacramental unity of history and theology in the one gospel. We cannot countenance any scheme by which the gospel is degraded into “a mere tissue of significances . . . dissolves into a mere SIGNIFICAT and has lost the force of the EST!”

## DOING WITHOUT TRUTH

*Will truth disappear before our very eyes by means of a clever hermeneutical sleight of hand? Gene Edward Veith Jr., dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and associate professor of English at Concordia University-Wisconsin, addresses these issues in a way that can easily be grasped by those who have not yet been introduced to the latest thing going, in Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994, 256 pages), as can be appreciated in this excerpt from pages 56–57 of this work.*

Deconstructionism represents a new kind of relativism, one that is intellectually sophisticated, theoretically grounded, and methodologically rigorous. As it corrodes the very concept of absolute truth, deconstructionism provides the intellectual grounding for the popular relativism running rampant in post-modern society.

Today’s universities, while ostensibly devoted to cultivating truth, now argue that truth does not exist. This does not mean that the universities are closing their doors. Rather, the universities are redefining what scholarship is all about.

Knowledge is no longer seen as absolute truth; rather, knowledge is seen in terms of rearranging information into new paradigms. Human beings construct models to account for their experiences. These models—whether world views or scientific theories—are texts, constantly being revised. These paradigms are useful fictions, a matter of “telling stories.” But the stories are now indistinguishable from what was once assumed to be knowledge: scientific “truth,” ethics, law, history.

Contemporary scholars seek to dismantle the paradigms of the past and to bring the marginal into the center (rewriting his-

tory in favor of those who have been excluded from power—women, homosexuals, blacks, Native Americans, and other victims of Scholars attack received ideas with withering skepticism, while constructing new models as alternatives. Those who celebrate the achievements of Western civilization are accused of a narrow-minded “Euro-centrism,” this view is challenged by “Afro-centrism,” which exalts Africa as the pinnacle of civilization. Male-dominant thought is replaced by feminist models. Patriarchal religions such as Judaism and Christianity are challenged and replaced with matriarchal religions; the influence of the Bible is countered by the influence of “goddess-worship.” Homosexuality must no longer be considered a psychological problem; rather, homophobia is.

These new models tend to be adopted without the demands for rigorous evidence required by traditional scholarship. If Euro-centrism is a fault, one would think Afro-centrism would be similarly narrow-minded. If patriarchy is wrong, why would matriarchy be any better? But these quibbles miss the point of postmodernist scholarship. Truth is not the issue. The issue is power. The new models “empower” groups formerly excluded. Scholarly debate proceeds not so much by rational argument or the amassing of objective evidence, but by rhetoric (which scheme advances the most progressive ideals?) and by the assertion of power (which scheme advances my particular interest group, or more to the point, which is most likely to win me a research grant, career advancement, and tenure?).

As one postmodernist researcher admits, the goal of scholars is “no longer truth but performativity,” no longer what kind of research will lead to the discovery of verifiable facts, but what kind of research will work best, where “working best” means producing more research along the same lines . . . . The university or institution of learning cannot in these circumstances be concerned with transmitting knowledge in itself, but must be tied ever more narrowly to the principle of performativity so that the question asked by teacher, student, and government must now no longer be “Is it true?” but “What use is it?” and “How much is it worth?”

Whereas classical scholarship sought the true, the beautiful, and the good, the postmodernist academy seeks “what works.” The traditional academic world operated by reason, study, and research; postmodernist academia is governed by ideological agendas, political correctness, and power struggles.

It is not clear whether the intellectual establishment’s abandoning of truth has influenced the culture (by churning out the teachers, journalists, and other opinion-makers) or whether the intellectual establishment is simply rationalizing the values of the culture. At any rate, the arcane academic debates mirror the loss of truth and the rejection of absolutes characterizing postmodern culture.

Abstract ideas are not the only casualty. When the objective realm is swallowed up by subjectivity, moral principles evaporate. Other people—even spouses and children—are valued only for what they can contribute to my pleasure. Even external objects are sucked into the vortex of subjectivity. The old materialism sought to accumulate valuable objects; the new materialism is interested not so much with objects in themselves as with the status they bring and the experiences they represent. “From rock music to tourism to television and even education,” points out Steven Con-

nor, “advertising imperatives and consumer demand are no longer for goods, but for experiences.”

In this new intellectual climate, politicians make earnest promises, and then once they are elected, with astonishing speed and seemingly no sense of contradiction, they break them. Politicians, of course, have always broken their promises, but never with such shamelessness. Judges exercise ingenious “interpretive strategies” to throw out centuries of civilized law and to construct brand new legal principles reflecting current fashions. Journalists, taught that objectivity is impossible, write biased news stories and advance their own ideological agendas. Teachers, convinced that there are no objective truths to learn, teach “processes” instead, offering “experiences” instead of knowledge and encouraging their students to question existing values and to create their own.

Many people find this loss of truth liberating. If we construct our own reality, then there are no limits to our freedom. In the words of a writer paraphrasing the punk rock band Johnny Rotten and the Sex Pistols, “If nothing [is] true, everything [is] possible.”

## DOTTY ABOUT WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Dot Nuechterlein laments the limiting of women’s service in Missouri Synod churches in “A Perspective on Women in Missouri,” *Lutheran Forum*, August 1994, vol. 28 no. 3, pp. 41–43. To improve the situation she exhorts: “All of us must together engage in study and discussion and prayer, under the guidance of the Spirit, as we examine the issue of service” (p. 43). What should we study? “Perhaps if we began with the doctrine of baptism and the Great Commission, coupled with a realistic appraisal of what humans are truly like, we would not repeat the mistakes of our forebears” (p. 43).

A careful reading of Mrs. Nuechterlein’s “Perspective” suggests other areas of study, however. The second and third chief parts of the Small Catechism seem more germane than the fourth in addressing the essayist’s concerns. For example, the essay states that “today . . . the church lags behind the culture in preparing and using females in partnership with males” (p. 42). This statement suggests that church needs to measure up to culture in the issue of women’s service. A reading of the Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer and its explanation confounds this notion.

Our Lord Jesus teaches us to pray “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Luther explains that “God’s will is done when he breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God’s name or let his kingdom come.”

The culture of this fallen world is the enemy of Christ’s kingdom. The will of pagans is by nature opposed to God’s will (1 Jn 2:15–17, Ro 12:2). Therefore, church must never look to culture for models of human relationships.

Mrs. Nuechterlein’s “Perspective” lacks logical consistency. To support the idea that the church’s use of “females in partnership with males” ought to imitate modern culture, an allusion is made to Romans 3:23–24. She paraphrases: “We are not distinct in the

sight of God, for all have fallen short in sinfulness [*sic*] and all receive the promises of forgiveness” (p. 42). Based on this statement, it is asserted: “We cannot believe—because God has not said! that our Maker views daughters differently than sons” (p. 42).

The doctrine of baptism is called upon to bolster the argument. “How are we to respond to our baptism and to the commission to go and teach?” asks the essayist (p. 42). She chafes at Missouri’s “traditional answer . . . that, depending on our physical shape, the church must ascertain which channels are the appropriate ones” (p. 42). Mrs. Nuechterlein maintains that “there is nothing in the baptismal covenant suggesting such a proviso: at the font we don’t separate infants into boy and girl categories” (p. 42).

This way of speaking is echoed in the opening paragraph of the CTCR’s latest opinion, “The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices” (*Reporter*, December 1994, vol. 20 no. 12, p. 8). Therein we find it stated that “No one is baptized to be either man or woman.” What can be the point here? Humans come in two distinct genders, male and female. Both are baptized and by God’s grace grow into Christian men and women respectively. Baptism does not neuter God’s good creation. Baptism does wash fallen humans clean from sin. Surely our sexuality is redeemed, not obliterated. In its disregard toward the sexual human bodies that are God’s own handiwork, the language of Mrs. Nuechterlein and the CTCR smacks of Gnosticism. If Missourians want their synod to turn into a cult served by priestesses, allowing this kind of language is a good first step.

Yet a little later in her *Forum* article comes the complaint that “many clergymen get little training for shepherding the ewes of the flock, assuming, apparently, that what’s good for the rams is good enough for all. It is not” (p. 42).

First, females ought not to be distinguished from males in the church. Then, females require special pastoral care, in sharp distinction from care appropriate for males. The illogic is evident. If ewes must be treated differently than rams, then Mrs. Nuechterlein’s argument from baptism does not hold water.

The Catechism is useful in addressing another concern from Mrs. Nuechterlein’s “Perspective.” The complaint is made that “Christendom continues to be experienced as primarily a man’s realm” (p. 42). It is considered a problem that “this church is . . . a male-dominated body” (p. 42), but: *Jesus Christus Dominus est*. The Lord rules his church. For Christians who take the Second Article of the Creed to heart, this is not a problem. This is a source of joy. The rule of the Church by Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is also a source of hope. Members of the Church Militant long for the Bridegroom’s complete domination of his Bride when he comes again at the Last Day (Eph 5:25–27, Rev 21:2–4).

Mrs. Nuechterlein’s “Perspective on Women in Missouri” calls for study and discussion of the issue of women’s service in the church. For years, other women who share her views have been calling for the same thing. Their statements have received a good deal of response from Missouri’s clergy and laity. Yet these women do not seem to have heeded any respondents who differ with them. One is left to wonder what their continued call for discussion means.

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## PENANCE FOR RETURNING WARRIORS

*“Not a few modern philosophers and theologians are of the view that, contrary to implications of Nietzsche’s aesthetic rebellion, even fully autonomous individuals have reasons of the mind and heart to experience moral pain occasionally of their behavior in time of war,” says Bernard J. Verkamp in The Moral Treatment of Returning Warriors in Early Medieval and Modern Times (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1993). The portion cited below comes from pages 11–12 of his introduction to this stimulating documentary and discussion.*

The Western world, as Philip Rieff has noted, has largely become a “therapeutic” society. In the name of “authenticity” and “individualistic creativity,” many restrictions of old have been discarded. What were once described as wrongdoings and shortcomings are now often extolled as indicative of a liberated ego or dismissed as sickness and social maladjustment. Moral pain or feelings of guilt and shame, which were once considered the natural, interior complements of virtuous behavior, are either ridiculed, or reduced to “psychic difficulties.”

In sharp contrast to such a therapeutically oriented society is one in which there prevails a moral sensibility based upon acceptance and interiorization of a set of principles and ideals derived from a uniquely religious teleology. Nowhere, probably, has this been more apparent than in the way soldiers returning from war have been treated by contemporary American and early medieval Christian society, respectively.

The moral needs of soldiers returning from Vietnam, for example, were often overlooked by American society. Unable, apparently, to face up to its own failure to win the war, or to admit its own complicity in a war that may have been unwise or unjust and an occasion for unprecedented atrocities, the country as a whole simply chose not to take seriously the moral pain felt by many of the Vietnam veterans.

In contrast, the Christian community of the first millennium generally assumed that warriors returning from battle would or should be feeling guilty and ashamed for all the wartime killing they had done. Far from having such feelings dismissed as insignificant or irrelevant, returning warriors were encouraged to seek resolution of them through rituals of purification, expiation, and reconciliation. To accommodate these latter needs, religious authorities of the period not infrequently imposed various and sundry penances on returning warriors, depending on the kind of war they had been engaged in, the number of their killings, and the intention with which they had been carried out.

The existence of such an early medieval penitential practice regarding returning warriors has long been recognized by historians. No claim of originality is being made, therefore, for the documentation of its development in the first chapter of this book. Past references to the practice, however, have generally been rather cursory and piecemeal, and it is to be hoped that the chronological and more detailed presentation here will better illustrate the nature and extent of the practice. [Note: subsequent chapters deal with the underlying rationale of such practices, their demise, and possible applications to our modern era. At one point, Verkamp cites a Lutheran Vietnam veteran who speaks of the healing he found in the Lutheran liturgy!—ed.]

## PUBLIC ABSOLUTION

The *Common Service Book of the Lutheran Church*, authorized by The United Lutheran Church in America, 1917, pp. 242–243, directs the pastor to proclaim the following words after the public confession of sins by the congregation (note especially the second paragraph):

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, hath had mercy upon us, and for the sake of the sufferings, death and resurrection of His dear Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, forgive us all our sins. As a Minister of the Church of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore declare unto you who do truly repent and believe in Him, the entire forgiveness of all your sins: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

On the other hand, by the same authority, I declare unto the impenitent and unbelieving, that so long as they continue in their impenitence, God hath not forgiven them their sins, and will assuredly visit their iniquities upon them, if they turn not from their evil ways, and come to true repentance and faith in Christ, ere the day of grace be ended.

One suspects the hymnal committee attempted in this way to circumvent the problem of making a general declaration of absolution to a congregation in which the impenitent might be numbered. The effect of this form, however, appears to make absolution conditional. The troubled conscience might still be left wondering whether he be truly penitent and thereby forgiven—wondering whether the absolution was really for him. Pieper notes: “Writing against Paul Tarnov, who defended the conditional form of absolution, Christian Chemnitz pointed out that then also Baptism and the Lord’s Supper would have to be dispensed in a conditional form, that then the certainty of the forgiveness of sins would rest on the contrition and faith of the penitent instead of resting on the objective gracious promise of the forgiveness for Christ’s sake. Cp. *Lehre und Wehre*, 1876, p. 193 ff.: ‘Is Absolution to be Pronounced Categorically or Hypothetically?’” (*Christian Dogmatics* 2:540, n. 73).

Corporate absolution in services of *The Lutheran Hymnal* and *Lutheran Worship* without Holy Communion casts similar shadows. This absolution concludes with “Grant this, Lord, to us all.” Should the pastor turn away from the congregation and to the altar as if a prayer as opposed to a declaration? Reed says: “The Declaration of Grace as a sacramental act should be pronounced in a firm tone of assurance. The final sentence, ‘Grant this, O Lord, unto us all,’ is in effect a prayer, but it contains an element of admonition, and the minister should not turn to the altar at this point. The entire declaration should be regarded as a unit and be said facing the congregation” (*The Lutheran Liturgy*, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947, p. 259). What does such alchemy hope to accomplish which mixes absolution and admonition together in one breath? How *should* a general absolution be declared—if it should be declared at all?

Luther, in an April 1533 letter to the Nurnberg city council (AE 50:75–77; see Pieper 2:531, n. 57), sought to nullify Osiander’s main argument against general, public absolution. In a footnote

to his translation of this letter, Gottfried Krodel comments that Osiander was afraid that through a public absolution, people (“thieves and crooks”) might be absolved of sins that should be retained. Be-cause of pastoral concern, Osiander insisted on private confession and absolution, especially in view of the Lord’s Supper and the necessity of practicing ecclesiastical discipline. Luther agreed that private confession and absolution were necessary, but he did not for that reason wish to eliminate corporate confession and absolution:

The preaching of the holy gospel itself is principally and actually an absolution in which forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in general and in public to many persons, or publicly or privately to one person alone. Therefore absolution may be used in public and in general, and in special cases also in private, just as the sermon may take place publicly or privately, and as one might comfort many people in public or someone individually in private.

Even if not all believe [the word of absolution], that is no reason to reject [public] absolution, for each absolution, whether administered publicly or privately, has to be understood as demanding faith and as being an aid to those who believe in it, just as the gospel itself also proclaims forgiveness to all men in the whole world and exempts no one from this universal context. Nevertheless the gospel certainly demands our faith and does not aid those who do not believe it; and yet the universal context of the gospel has to remain.

Regarding the idea that no one might desire private absolution if one has public absolution and keeps it in use, we say that this is definitely a weighty issue, [but] that consciences nevertheless are in need of this special comfort. For one has to instruct consciences that the comfort of the gospel is directed to each individual particularly; therefore, as you people who understand these matters know, the gospel has to be applied through Word and sacrament to each individual particularly, so that each individual in his conscience is tossed about by the question whether this great grace, which Christ offers to all men, belongs to him too.

Under these circumstances it can easily be understood that one is not to abolish private absolution in favor of public absolution; also, this application makes more clear the meaning of the gospel and the power of the keys. For very few people know how to use public absolution or apply it to themselves, unless in addition this application reminds them that they also ought to apply the general absolution to themselves as if it belonged to each individually; for this is the true office and task of the gospel: definitely to forgive sins by grace.

For these reasons we do not consider that general absolution is either to be rejected or to be abolished, but that nevertheless the personal application and [private] absolution should be maintained.

We do well to keep these aspects of the neglected “third” sacrament of Holy Absolution before Christendom, especially in these days wherein private absolution has fallen into disuse and

when corporate confession and absolution has suffered the hackneyed vulgarizations of “creative” liturgies. When we see how it is going with absolution, we see how it is going with the gospel itself.

JAB

## FREDERICK MANFRED AND THE HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN

*On Tuesday, October 4, 1994, a brief segment on National Public Radio’s “All Things Considered” caught my ear. About a month earlier, a renowned American author, Frederick Manfred, died of brain cancer. At the memorial service, his daughter Freya recalled a visit her father had received in the hospital from the chaplain, a Roman Catholic woman. I sought out Freya and received her permission to reprint this account, which relates the wit of the poet and the naiveté of the chaplain. How might you have responded to such wit? The part of the chaplain is printed in italics.*

The chaplain introduced herself to Dad by name and Dad nodded. “What do you do?” he said. *I’m the hospital chaplain.* “And what do you want with me?” *My job is to visit with all the patients who are about to have an operation.* “For what purpose?” *Well, I guess it’s to see where they stand spiritually, to see if they’d like to talk or pray for a while before their operation.* “Ah, may I ask, what religion are you?” *Me? Actually, I’m a Catholic by upbringing.* “Catholic. That’s a strong religion. A lot of beautiful words and phrases in the Catholic religion. Some surprising works of art too. The Catholic Church has an amazing history. Have you read much about it?” She fiddled with her lace collar for a moment. *No, I don’t really know much about Catholic history.* “Well, it’s an unforgettable story—the Catholic Church. I’ll tell you a few things you might want to look into.” And Dad proceeded to tell and describe the history of Catholicism, paying special attention and note to Catholic art and Catholic writings from every century up to the present. And woven into his comments were a few remarks about some of the helpful or beautiful things the Catholic Church had given to mankind and a few other remarks about the less helpful and uglier aspects of the Catholic gifts. And all very kindly said, of course.

The lovely chaplain’s mouth fell slightly open during Dad’s long discourse. And finally, he finished and waved one hand. “That’s a start,” he said. *Well, well, well, she said, I guess I should have studied more about it. But, Mr. Manfred, the reason I came here today was to just see how you are doing spiritually during this time of great stress.* “Well, tell me,” he said, “what are you going to do with that information once I supply it?” *That depends, she said, on where you are spiritually at this time. And perhaps I could guide you along the way.*

Dad’s great head laid itself back on the pillow a moment and the eyes closed briefly. Well, tell me, as chaplain here, have you read much philosophy, philosophical writings?” A touch of nervousness again, *No, no I haven’t.* “Then you might try it sometime. I have a list of good ones for you. Try Nietzsche and Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein and Plato. These are wonderful guys, wonderful minds. Give them a try.” *But, Mr. Manfred. . . .* “And another thing,” he interrupted, “what about poetry? Who are your favorite poets or writers? In your role as chaplain do you

refer people at all to literature?” *I really don’t read literature. Certainly, I never read any poetry, but maybe I should try some.* “Oh, yes, yes. It will be well worth your time. Those guys will take you somewhere. Try Chaucer. Try Whitman. And don’t forget Emily Dickinson. She’s the best.”

*But, Mr. Manfred, could we spend one moment on your personal relationship with God?* “Well, I’ll tell you, when it comes to a personal creed, I think I most take after my Grandpa. He was an agnostic—and he said the best things about religion that I’ve ever heard.” *I see. . . .*, she said warily. “Yep, in fact, Grandpa made the one statement about religion that I could wholeheartedly agree with my whole life.” *And what was that, Mr. Manfred?* “Grandpa used to say—and it’s the truest thing I’ve ever heard—he said this: ‘God is in you and he is smiling.’”

The chaplain repeated the first part of what Dad had said. *God is in you. . . .* “That’s right, God is in you and he is smiling.” The chaplain slid to her feet. *Well, Mr. Manfred, I can see you’re doing just fine.* “Yes, I am,” he said, and she departed. “Nice to meet you, lady!” he called to her, but she was halfway down the hall and must not have heard, for she did not reply.

## THE CULTURE OF INTERPRETATION

*Provocative and critical works on modern hermeneutics come, naturally enough, not from theological faculties, but from English departments. For example, Gene Edward Veith (see Doing Without Truth elsewhere in this Forum) is associate professor of English at Concordia University-Mequon, Wisconsin. Another example comes via the work of Roger Lundin, professor of English at Wheaton College. The following excerpt comes from The Culture of Interpretation: Christian Faith and the Postmodern World (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993) pp. 37–41. This volume is very rich but not too technical for the average reader.*

In whatever form it takes, the contemporary fascination with perspective and interpretation in academic study is grounded in a deeply embedded Western faith in the power of language and the individual will. Perhaps the most important recent source of postmodern theories of the centrality of interpretation is Nietzsche, whose views on language have exercised an extraordinary influence in the contemporary academic world. In a fragment written in 1873, Nietzsche asked, “What, then, is truth?” It is, he answered himself,

a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins. . . . To be truthful means using the customary metaphors—in moral terms: the obligation to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie herd-like in a style obligatory for all.

For Nietzsche and his ideological descendants, all knowledge is a matter of perspective; that is, it is an issue of interpretation, and all interpretations are lies. It would be impossible for matters to be otherwise, Nietzsche would argue, because the only relationship of language to reality, of words to things, is that which has been established by acts of violence and power and through the agencies of habit and convention. If we deceive ourselves by believing in a “deep sense of how things are which it is the duty of philosophers to spell out in language,” argues Rorty, an honest analysis will show us that what we call “common sense” is nothing more than a “disposition to use the language of our ancestors, to worship the corpses of their metaphors.” Metaphors originally gain their status as “truth” through acts of force and deception by those who promulgate them; those metaphors retain their power for succeeding generations only because of the predominance of sloth, ignorance, and forgetfulness in the human species. Since all uses of language involve deception, Nietzsche claims, one can do nothing more than seek to dissemble with power and effectiveness. According to Nietzsche, one lies for the purpose of satisfying one’s desires or deepest needs:

In this condition [of intoxication] one enriches everything out of one’s own abundance: what one sees, what one desires, one sees swollen, pressing, strong, overlaid with energy. The man in this condition transforms things until they mirror his power—until they are reflections of his perfection. This compulsion to transform into the perfect is—art.

If Nietzsche is a most prominent recent source for contemporary theories of interpretation, we may track other influences—including, of course, those that helped to shape the thought of Nietzsche—back through several centuries. We can begin with the seventeenth century, at which time the outlines of a general theory of hermeneutics began to emerge even as a skeptical but influential minority in the Western world began to lose its faith in classical theism. In one sense, the decline of theism made inevitable the rise of what Robert Solomon has called our modern “transcendental pretense” of the self. In another sense, however, the promotion of the transcendental self was itself one of the most powerful forces that quickened the pace at which a theistic understanding of transcendence lost its power as a unifying cultural force.

To claim that our contemporary passion for interpretive theory started to develop in earnest only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is not to argue, of course, that hermeneutics is in any way a new subject. In Greek mythology, Hermes was the messenger who shuttled back and forth between the conclaves of the gods and the world of mortals, conveying word of the divine judgments on human affairs. In Jewish and Christian history, hermeneutical activity flourished long before the name of Hermes ever became attached to a formal discipline in the eighteenth century. In both the classical and the Christian worlds, hermeneutics as a practice involved the effort to translate what was taken to be a divine, authoritative word into language that would have power and relevance for a particular community.

As interpreters began to reflect self-consciously about their practices in the early modern era, however, this long established

view of interpretation underwent a dramatic transformation. With traditional texts and beliefs being questioned in revolutionary ways at that time, interpreters could no longer assume the reliability or authority of the documents and doctrines they were trying to understand. One consequence was that, by the time of the romantic movement, hermeneutics had come to be associated with the search for ways of making discredited texts relevant to skeptical readers, rather than with the task of explaining an authoritative word or command. Instead of assuming the authority of the text in question, the romantic interpreter had to prove that authority by demonstrating the text’s power to provide a coherent explanation of the experience of its audience. In many ways, romanticism in literature and theology was a dramatic effort to snatch the ethical, aesthetic, and emotional relics of the Christian faith from its metaphysical house, which was being consumed by the flames of skepticism.

In Christian proclamation under the influence of romanticism, the new understanding of hermeneutics led to a preoccupation with the status of the audience to be addressed with the gospel. Pressured to demonstrate the relevance of Christian faith to its “cultured despisers” (Schleiermacher’s memorable phrase), many Christian interpreters in the Enlightenment and romanticism pared the biblical narrative into an appealing shape in their attempts to appeal to an educated and often cynical audience. Whether they were promoting a rational or a romantic God, these early modern interpreters were often willing to spend the capital of Christian belief in exchange for earning high interest in the marketplace of intellectual currency.

From a philosophical standpoint the romantic movement had its origins in the Cartesian revolution of the early modern period. It was Cartesianism that had prompted Western thinkers to believe that the isolated, unaided self had the power to discover truth through its own ratiocination. This Cartesian confidence in turn served to promote the utopian visions of human progress and happiness that would figure so prominently in eighteenth-century thought. It was when this utopianism suffered dramatic setbacks at the hands of epistemological skepticism and the French Revolution that the romantic understanding of hermeneutics was born.

In the intellectual world, the romantic age bequeathed to us a psychological and grammatical understanding of the hermeneutical process; and in the culture as a whole, romanticism has played a key role in bringing about “the triumph of the therapeutic.” A therapeutic culture seeks to promote the efforts of the autonomous self to discover fulfillment independent of the restraints of precedent and community. “Ours is the first cultural revolution fought to no other purpose than greater amplitude and richness of living itself,” Philip Rieff argues. In that cultural revolution, the theory of interpretation has come to serve as a most useful tool in therapeutic hands. If Rorty is right when he celebrates the complete triumph of romanticism in Western culture—“About two hundred years ago, the idea that truth was made rather than found began to take hold of the imagination of Europe”—then *construction* has come to replace *discovery* as the basic metaphor of the mind’s activity. In a world where all truth is made rather than found, thought has no task except that of constructing interpretations that may help us live contentedly in a world where nothing is at stake beyond the therapist’s “manipulatable sense of well-being.”

In short, in the postmodern West, we have inherited from romanticism an inveterate belief in the power of human language to transform the world, or at least to alter radically our perspectives on that world. It is this legacy that has bequeathed to the contemporary academic community its faith in what might be called *verbal fiat*—its faith in the power of the human word to transform “things until they mirror [human] power,” as Nietzsche put it. We have come to the point, as Robert Hughes says, where we appear to “want to create a sort of linguistic Lourdes, where evil and misfortune are dispelled by a dip in the waters of euphemism.”

## EARLY CHURCH VBS

A few years ago, someone came up with a unique idea for a Vacation Bible School. Entitled *Marketplace 29 AD*, it enabled participants to experience a little of what life was like in Jesus’ day. The children wore costumes and had their classes in tents with a town “story teller” visiting each day to share the Gospel story. To enhance the theme, crafts fitting the style of Jesus’ day were chosen. With some churches doing it year after year, *Marketplace 29 AD* has gained wide acceptance.

An equally fascinating time is the history of Christianity in the period after the Ascension of Christ through the sixth century. This was an age that began with severe persecution (Acts 7) and then witnessed tremendous growth and acceptance for the Christian religion. Ultimately, Christianity became the state religion.

This Vacation Bible School curriculum, *Follow the Lamb*, will take both students and teachers back to a world where Christianity was just beginning, to the days before there were denominations, districts, publishing houses, or Vacation Bible Schools. There was not even a church building for the followers of “the Way” (which was the first name given to Christians as recorded in Acts) to worship in. How did these early Christians worship their God and live their lives? What did they believe? How did they teach and proclaim their belief so that “thousands were being added” (Acts)? Can the early Christians offer anything to modern man? What kind of legacy have they left us? These are the questions we will ponder and explore while attempting to recreate life in the early church for our students.

Designed for use in a five-day VBS setting, the suggested daily schedule is three hours. Anytime during the day that fits your setting would be appropriate. I would encourage an evening program, as it offers an opportunity to have adult classes. You might consider offering a simple meal before the sessions. This would be quite in keeping with what the first Christians did as they gathered.

The early church era is not usually a well known topic to the average VBS teacher. Thus it will be important for all teachers and helpers to become as familiar as they can with the subject before the week of VBS. There are several ways to accomplish this objective. Why not hold a meeting for teaching the teachers? Let the pastor or someone who has taken the time to read up on the subject lead this group. The success of any teaching experience is dependent upon adequate preparation: know your subject and get comfortable talking about it! Least effective is the approach that leaves preparation up to the individual teacher. I have included a very

brief background section and a list of resources for further study. This can be found in the “Teacher Prepare” section.

Part of what makes any VBS stimulating for the participants is the “extras” that help to create the mood and excitement. These “extras” foster an eager attitude toward the entire experience. Thus it is crucial to the success of this curriculum that your committee takes time to set the stage and create the drama of the early years of Christianity. There is a section entitled “Setting the Stage” that will give specific ideas and suggestions for you to accomplish this goal.

The lessons themselves are those that the early Christians imparted to newcomers and children. This group that was preparing for baptism was called the catechumenate (groups of learners). After three years of instruction, the catechumens (learners) were ready for baptism. This included an intensive week before their baptism. In our brief week of VBS we will, of course, only have a chance to taste of what these learners feasted on during those three years. The lessons for each age group have the same daily themes and topics. You will find the teacher’s guides and the student activity sheets divided by age. Each student should receive copies of the lesson worksheet pages. There are no expensive workbooks to purchase. Look for these in the “Catechesis” section.

The early church has left a legacy of hymn texts sung throughout Christendom to this day. A selection of early church music included in this program offers all participants a sampling of “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” that the church regularly uses in our day. The children will then be strengthened for the Divine Service in their congregations. By learning this music, even the littlest of children can join in on a Sunday morning. They will feel that they are a part of the worshipping community. Look for the music in the “Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs” section—and remember, there were no organs in the first century!

As with the music, early Christian art has much to teach and offer us. Thus, the suggested crafts will offer as much as possible a recreation of the craft-work of the early church era. Keeping in mind economics and the desire for lasting value, we have made the projects feasible for the various ages of artisans in your VBS. Please see the section entitled “Arts and Crafts.”

Mentioned above was the suggestion of a meal before an evening session. This was what the early Christians did, since they had no church building. They gathered in someone’s home, eating and worshipping together. Maybe your church has a group of ladies or senior citizens who would just love to prepare a simple meal for the participants each evening! There is a section entitled “Food and Fellowship,” which offers ideas for meals and snacks that are economical and fitting to the theme.

Because worship was the center for the life of the early church, there is a strong emphasis on worship in this curriculum. In an era when Scripture was hand-copied and extremely expensive, even individual churches did not own their own Bible. Every week, each congregation passed the fragments of Scripture they had to another house church. They in turn would receive a new fragment for Sunday’s reading. To be able to hear it read and taught was the highlight of the believer’s week. In the suggestions for daily openings I have offered a re-creation and scaled-down model of what happened in the house churches of the early Christians. The early church also provides the model for the closing program. Look for these in the “Worship” section.

Many Vacation Bible Schools have begun to send daily newsletters home with the children to inform the parents about the happenings and themes of the day. I have included suggestions and a copy-ready newsletter pages for your use. These are found in the “Getting the Word Out” section, which also includes publicity ideas for the weeks before your VBS.

God bless you as you undertake to teach the children. It is my prayer that this week of stepping back into the history of the early Christian church will give you a fresh perspective on where we’ve come from and what is truly important! Start early, pray often, and stay in the Word as you begin and carry out this important task!

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## AN ANTHOLOGY OF REU’S SERMONS

*First the tasting and then the pitch. First, a sampling of Reu’s sermon for Septuagesima based on Daniel 5:17–30. Then you may be the more interested in the offer that follows.*

Ever since the building of the tower of Babel and the confusion of languages which it necessitated, God had withdrawn His hand from apostate men, suffering them to walk in their own ways as heathen. They were to realize the limitations of their own strength and wisdom. In Abraham God separated a holy seed, and to him and his descendants He revealed Himself. Lacking the light of such gracious revelation, the heathen walked in darkness. Only now and then, when it seemed as though the sin of the heathen would mount to heaven, God intervened and manifested Himself. Made to feel the towering greatness and glorious might of the eternal Judge, they should stand still and become conscious of their own impotence and that of their gods. This was the experience of Pharaoh, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar. One of the most awe-inspiring manifestations of divine judgment is related in this chapter. We consider it today, so that we may learn some lessons from it for our own life.

### *I. What Do We Learn From the Judgment Which God Executed Upon Belshazzar?*

We learn from it, first, *how God finds the sinner*. Our text takes us in spirit to Babylon, the capital of the mighty Babylonian empire. It had reached the highest development of its power and extension during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. There in Babylon, at a banquet, sat the royal reveler Belshazzar, one of Nebuchadnezzar’s successors. Around him were gathered the princes and mighty men of his empire, also his wives and concubines. Wine flowed freely, and decency was soon forgotten. The banquet became an orgy. Immoderate drinking resulted in drunkenness. Then a devilish thought came to the mind of the intoxicated king. He sent for the holy vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple at Jerusalem and had brought to Babylon. The king and his mighty men, his wives and concubines drank wine out of the vessels which had been consecrated unto God’s service.

This was doing the same thing as if today drunken scoffers would force their way into our churches and seize the Communion cup, in order to drink out of it. But their sin did not stop there. The riotous revelers sang songs in honor of their gods and poured out libations to them from the sacred vessels. Could the Holy One in Israel look upon such a scene with indifference and restrain His arm? Could He allow Himself to be thus dishonored and treated with contempt? Hold ye your peace, and be still! While Belshazzar is still praising his heathen gods as being mightier than any other power, and while he still regards himself as invincible and therefore does as he pleases, divine judgment is already on its way, quick and sudden, mysterious and wonderful. Suddenly, in the midst of the noisy revel, there came forth fingers of a man’s hand; fingers only, which wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace. The king saw it; God wanted him to see it. The Lord had found him. The Holy One in Israel had come to punish him for the profanation of His name and the desecration of His sacred vessels.

God still finds every sinner. Even today, there are many who think they stand so high that no one will dare to approach them and tell them the truth. But God sees to it that they do not climb to heaven, and He masters them. They may ignore His Word, but they cannot escape His judgments. Others imagine that their doings are too well hidden, and that their wicked plans and purposes will never be uncovered, but murder will out. The omniscient and omnipresent One will find them and will reveal the thoughts of their hearts.

Many scoff and jeer at all holy things. They ridicule preaching, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, these vessels into which God has poured heavenly life for our benefit. They mock our Savior and all who believe in Him. They call us Christians, who also are the vessels of God, hypocrites and weaklings, while they look upon themselves as being the valiant heroes and wise men of today, who cannot be frightened, moved or ruined by anything. Be not offended because of such men. God finds them. He allows them to have their own way for a time, just as though they did not concern Him. But when His hour has come He seizes them with His strong hand. Adam, too, wanted to hide himself, but God brought him forth from his hiding place. David thought he could safely embrace Uriah’s wife because he was king, but the Lord’s arm laid hold upon him. Should there be any shameless and brazen-faced or secretive and hidden sinners among us, remember that God will find you. The pious may comfort themselves with the remembrance of the omnipresence of their God and Savior (Ps. 139:7–10), but the brazen-faced sinner will be terrified by the omnipresence of the Lord, when he falls into the hands of the holy and righteous God. How will he stand in His sight?

*America’s foremost authority on the writings and theology of Luther during the first half of the twentieth century, J. Michael Reu was a contributor to the Weimar edition of Luther’s works and a recognized authority in both the U.S. and in Europe on catechetical history, educational theory, and homiletics.*

*This definitive two-volume collection (each tome is over four hundred pages) includes 186 sermons, which cover every Sunday of the church year and also festival and special occasions, as well as major convention addresses translated for the first time from Ger-*

man. It is the only resource that presents all of Reu's English-language sermon outlines, sketches, and fully-developed sermons to enable scholars to examine Reu's theological presuppositions and historical insights as he applied these to preaching.

The editor and translator is The Reverend Dr. Paul I. Johnston, who has been published widely in the areas of Reu's theology and his philosophy of Christian education. He currently serves as pastor of Grace Ev. Lutheran Church of Liberal, Kansas, and as director of circulation and development for Lutheran Quarterly.

A special price for pastors is \$99.95 for the complete two-volume set, while the Library price is \$109.95 per volume. Order from Mellen Press, PO Box 450, Lewiston, NY 14092-0450, phone (716) 754-2788, but hurry! The offer expires at the end of June 1995. Inquiries may be directed to Rev. Johnston at PO Box 1253, Liberal, KS 67905, phone (316) 624-5900.

## SHOULD CONFESSIONS CONDEMN AND EXCLUDE?

We cite this timely piece from Theodore E. Schmauk's *The Confessional Principle and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church as Embodying the Evangelical Confession of the Christian Church*. Originally published in 1911 by the Board of Publication of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, this work has been reprinted in Concordia Publishing House's *Heritage Series*, although it appears that this 943-page volume is once again out of print, not being found in the editor's copy of the CPH catalog. If you can get your hands on one, do so! The following paragraphs are drawn from pages 38-49.

Many complicated causes contribute to the modern feeling that the Church should be sufficiently broad and liberal, not to raise its voice in condemnation of error, nor its hand in excluding even the unworthy and the reprobate from its membership.

The spirit of universal toleration, which is indifferent to doctrine, and regards it rather as a dead heirloom from a historical past, and more or less of an incubus to the Church of the present, than as the dynamic of faith and life; and which substitutes the common sense and personal judgment for the voice of the Church as recorded in its Confessions, is a prime cause for this feeling. But there are others.

One of these is the existence of many rival Protestant organizations, each claiming by the fact of their separate existence (and many of them repudiating their own claim by laxity of word and act), that they are the true Church, and that their confession and discipline are decisive. This spectacle does not in itself disprove that there really is some one Church which possesses the true doctrine, for the truth is nearly always surrounded by approximations and counterfeits of itself; but, in view of the fact that human nature is prone to regard *itself* as right, and to set up an exclusive claim of right for *its own party*, and to condemn all who are outside of its party—which the pages of history illustrate abundantly—the world today feels that even the true Church should be modest and slow to condemn others' errors and sins, since, very likely, at least a part of the condemnatory act is to be attributed to the ordinary

frailty of human nature, found even in the true Church, and not to the purity of doctrine which it rightly claims to emphasize.

Still another prejudice against Confessions that condemn is to be found in the emphasis which our modern life places upon the individual, as being of more importance than the institution, and upon the low views of the congregation of Christ which are current in our country. This is a serious thing. The general public has almost ceased to regard the Protestant Church as a divine institution, but looks on it as a voluntary human association into which individuals enter when they desire, in which they remain as long as they please, and from which they are privileged to withdraw, as they would from any other mere society, as a matter of course and of right, whenever they wish to do so, for any or no cause whatsoever. Each individual brings to the congregational society his sensitive personality, together with his "doctrinal views and opinions," which must be respected not only in discipline, but also in preaching, and which will resent any rebuke or allusion to them as error, even though the admonition be of the mildest kind.

The doctrine of the church as the Communion of Saints has fallen so low, that the Church is no longer regarded as a real brotherhood subject to the teaching and the discipline of a common Scriptural life. Not the doctrine of the Confessions, but the "sentiments," "opinions" and "views" of pastor and members, which are influenced rather by contemporary philosophical discussion than by a searching of the Scriptures or an assimilation of the Confessions, prevail in the congregation. There is a disposition to allow the pulpit, and the mind of the hearer, to be open and untrammelled on all sides, and to accept such ideas as seem to each individual to be most helpful to his own spiritual life. Hence each member is to be left to regulate his faith and life by ideas that appeal to him, rather than by the strict doctrine that is revealed in Scripture.

We reach one deep root of the matter when we say that the Church of this age, with all our other institutions, is affected by a reaction which the spirit of democracy is awakening against all authority. Whether the authority is good and lawful or not makes no difference. There is, especially in our nation, something in the nature of a universal protest against constraint or discipline of any kind. The disinclination to admit and to use authority, and the difficulty in which officials find themselves in administering their authority justly, without making a far-reaching mistake, or involving the cause which they represent in destructive consequences, have become exceedingly great. The feeling exists that "truth is mighty and will prevail." Give it a fair opportunity to fight its own battles, and stand back far enough, and it will win. What a pity it did not win in the Garden of Eden! Calvary and the Cross would then have been unnecessary. It will prevail indeed—in the end, when God shall be all in all. Meanwhile members of the Church are growing up with the idea that saving faith consists in subjective individual sentiment, and in the acceptance of the privileges of religion, without the acceptance of the duties and burdens and responsibilities which the Church must, if she is true to her Lord and to her members, impose upon all.

There is little willingness in the modern spirit to accept rebuke either for sin or for error. The Protestant idea of the individual right of conscience is carried so far that the Church, in its collective capacity, as representing God, cannot speak out against a torpid

conscience without being regarded as narrow and as attempting to exceed her authority.

For ourselves, we freely confess both our faith and our sympathy with the positive method of quietly and continuously sowing good seed over and over again, rather than in the continuous attempt and effort to pursue and destroy error by the use of ecclesiastical authority. While it will not do to allow error to spring up unchecked, since it is so much more prolific and overshadowing than truth; yet, nevertheless, the chief aim of the Church should be the planting of truth, and not the rooting out of error. The two go together, but there is constant danger that the zealot will turn his Christian devotion into a military fervor for destruction, and will “breathe out threatenings and slaughter” against error; and there is equally constant danger that the latitudinarian is neglecting the extirpation of error, because it is no eyesore to him and because he is not devoted, heart and soul, to the implantation of the sound doctrine . . . .

It is true that the tyranny of much of the earlier Protestantism, as exemplified in this country particularly by the laws of Puritanism, is not to be found in the Lutheran Church, whose heart is foreign to a rule of legalism of any sort. Krauth has plead the conspicuous innocence of the Lutheran Church as follows:

The glorious words of Luther were, ‘The pen, not the fire, is to put down heretics. The hangmen are not doctors of theology. This is not the place for force. Not the sword, but the Word, fits for this battle. If the Word does not put down error, error would stand, though the world were drenched with blood.’ By these just views, the Lutheran Church has stood, and will stand forever. But she is none the less earnest in just modes of shielding herself and her children from the teachings of error which takes cover under the pretense of private judgment. She would not burn Servetus, nor, for opinion’s sake, touch a hair of his head; neither, however, would she permit him to bear her name, to ‘preach another Jesus’ in her pulpits, to teach error in her universities, or to approach with her children the table of their Lord, Whom he denied. Her name, her confessions, her history, her very being protest against the supposition of such ‘fellowship with the works of darkness,’ such sympathy with heresy, such levity in regard to the faith. She never practiced thus. She never can do it.

Those who imagine . . . the right of men, within the Lutheran Church, to teach what they please in the face of her testimony, know not the nature of the right they claim, nor of the Church, whose very life involved her refusal to have fellowship with them in their error. It is not the right of private judgment which makes or marks a man Lutheran . . . . It and the right of Church discipline are coordinate and harmonious rights, essential to the prevention, each of the abuse of the other. To uphold either intelligently, is to uphold both. In maintaining, therefore, as Protestants, the right and duty of men to form their own convictions, unfettered by civil penalties or inquisitorial powers, we maintain, also, the right and duty of the Church to shield herself from corruption in doctrine by setting forth the truth in her Confession, by faithfully con-

troverting heresy, by personal warning to those that err, and, finally, with the contumacious, by rejecting them from her communion, till, through grace, they are led to see and renounce the falsehood for which they claimed the name of truth.

No church, apart from the fundamentals of the gospel in which her unity and very life are involved, is so mild, so mediating, so thoroughly tolerant as our own. Over against the unity of Rome under a universal Head, the unity of High-Churchism under the rule of Bishops, the unities which turn upon like rites or usages as in themselves necessary, or which build up the mere subtleties of human speculation into articles of faith, over against these the Lutheran Church was the first to stand forth, declaring that the unity of the Church turns upon nothing that is of man. Where the one pure Gospel of Christ is preached, where the one foundation of doctrine is laid, where the ‘one faith’ is confessed, and the alone divine Sacraments administered aright, there is the one Church; this is her unity.

Our fathers clearly saw and sharply drew the distinction between God’s foundation and man’s superstructure, between faith and opinion, between religion and speculative theology, and, with all these distinctions before them, declared, that consent in the doctrine of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments is the only basis of the unity of the Church. This basis, the Lutheran Church has defined and rests on it, to abide there, we trust, by God’s grace, to the end of time.

If the Lutheran Church is true to Scripture and true to herself, as the Church of the pure Word and Sacraments she cannot avoid the responsibility of condemnation and exclusion. Her ministers and congregations, after making all due allowance for the fact that they differ from the Church in Apostolic days in that they have not the Saviour or the inspired Apostles to guide them, that we are ignorant of the inner life, motives and principles of other men, and are not acquainted with either the conditions that determine their action, or the possibilities of amendment that their future may contain, and with due reference to the fact that others are not to be judged by us, that is, to receive a sweeping and final verdict on general principles at our hands; and, further, remembering that it is necessary to exercise the greatest patience and forbearance, and at times to refrain from judging even where the outward evidence seems to convince (John 8:11; 1 Cor. 4:5), must, nevertheless, both warn and exclude error from the Church.

When we come to examine the condemnatory elements to be found in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, we shall perhaps be surprised to see how much more mild they are, comparatively, than is the Scripture itself. We may also be surprised to find that the Augsburg Confession is not any stronger in its condemnations than is the Athanasian Creed, and that the Formula of Concord is probably as mild in its condemnation as is the Augsburg Confession.

It is strange that it does not occur to the Lutheran who condemns the Confessions for their minatory passages that they are far less minatory than the Scriptures themselves. Will we be consistent and *condemn Scripture* because *Scripture* condemns error, heresy, and wickedness?

## ORDAINING WOMEN: HAS THE TIME COME?

The ordination of women into the pastoral ministry of the confessional Lutheran churches is much closer than many thought. Currently a proposal to ordain women pastors is being put forth before the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany [*Selbstaendige Evangelische Lutherische Kirche (SELK)*], a long-time sister church of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS).

A hot debate has ensued involving the SELK bishop and certain faculty members. One could point to the confusion on this issue in other places. The pope has given a definite “no” to ordaining women priests, but a majority of American priests and laity do not agree with him. Matters among confessional Lutherans throughout the world are equally unsettled. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod’s (WELS) decision to ordain male parochial school teachers redefines what was intended by ordination and raises the question why women teachers should not be given the same benefit. Associate membership of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) puts that church in a delicate position in any protest against the ordination of women, since LWF member churches assume the practice without debate. Since most Protestant churches ordain women, it is not surprising that members of Lutheran churches who have resisted having women pastors should find no reason for delaying their ordination. No longer is the question “Why should women be ordained?” but “Is there any reason they shouldn’t?”

Because of its size, a split in the SELK regardless of the cause would have tragic consequences for maintaining its seminary and mission outreach. Reasons for continued independence from the large Lutheran territorial churches will be questioned. Nevertheless, a potentially divisive proposal for ordaining women comes from certain faculty members at its Oberursel seminary. For example, two of four essays found in the seminary’s *OberurselerHefte 28* (1994) support the ordaining of women. This position stands in stark contrast to the writings of the soon-to-be-retired SELK Bishop, Dr. Jobst Schoene, in his *Hirtenbrief zur Frage der Ordination von Frauen zum Amt der Kirche* (“A Pastoral Letter on the Question of the Ordination of Women into the Ministerial Office,” July 25, 1994).

This matter is not limited to Germany. The SELK and its predecessors have been the most prominent confessional church in Europe since the first half of the last century. Its theologians have been involved in the major theological questions of the time, and its congregations provided pastors and other forms of assistance to other places of the world, including the United States and South Africa. It is a major player in the International Lutheran Conference, a worldwide association of confessional churches.

Close relationships between SELK and LCMS pastors have existed since the beginning. The LCMS provided assistance in restarting theological education after World War II at Oberursel. Seminary students are exchanged each year. The German church through its theological faculty has warned the LCMS about compromising its confessional Lutheran heritage in the Reformed-Arminian American environment. Isolated from LCMS participation, the possibility that the SELK will ordain

women pastors not only increases—it seems inevitable. This is not a one-church matter!

Matters are exacerbated by language. Very few LCMS pastors read German. Canadian, English, Australian, and American pastors can read each other’s writings. Translation of the German essays is unlikely, but should SELK adopt the ordination of women, the arguments of these essays will play a major role in our own debate. Then it may be too late.

Professor Volker Stolle has taken a prominent role in raising this question in SELK. In the special publication of the Oberursel faculty, “May Women Serve in the [Ministerial] Office?” (*OberurselerHefte 28* [1994], pp. 69–79), Stolle argued that there are no New Testament arguments against ordaining women (“*Neutestamentliche Aspekte zur Frage der Ordination von Frauen*,” i.e., “New Testament Aspects to the Question of the Ordination of Women”). The essay is dated January 20, 1994. That same year in the July issue of its official quarterly, *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* (pp. 118–26), he concludes an extensive review of *Frauenordination im Kontext lutherischer Ekklesiologie (The Ordination of Women in the Context of Lutheran Ecclesiology)* by finding no theological reasons for excluding women from ordination (p. 126). Now for a third time, he makes a defense of the practice in “*Luther, das ‘Amt’ und die Frauen*,” in *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* (January 1995).

On August 29, Bishop Schoene responded with a pastoral letter. Dr. Stolle’s January 1995 essay is in turn a response to the bishop’s letter, which is specifically mentioned (p. 3, n. 5). Dr. Stolle’s January 1995 essay on Luther furthers some of the arguments he raised in his New Testament essay. Luther’s prohibitions about ordaining women are as “time-bound” (*zeitgebunden*) as Paul’s. In other words, they were culturally conditioned. Another time and culture are free from these prohibitions.

His New Testament essay mentions women wearing hats as a case in point (p. 76). These arguments cannot receive lengthy response here, but let it be said that Paul’s prohibitions against women preaching went *against* the culture of that time. They were not time bound, *zeitgebunden*. Pagan temples had priestesses, and the Corinthians were following common practice in having women preachers.

Arguments offered for ordaining women in the German situation have already been raised among Lutherans in America and will inevitably and sadly be raised in the LCMS. The novelty is not that Dr. Stolle uses the same argument about these prohibitions in regard to St. Paul, but that he uses them in regard to Luther! He speaks of Luther’s view as time-bound, *zeitgebunden*.

With Luther many American Lutherans are treading on less than completely familiar ground. For us he is known with few exceptions through translation. Germans obviously do not have this problem. They are also more likely to know Latin. For these reasons the problem of what Luther may or may not have said may be remote to English-speaking Lutherans, but a positive decision of the SELK to ordain women will bring this decision to our doorsteps.

Professor Stolle does not pick the title of his Luther essay by chance. The late Professor Hans Kirsten (†1994), a member of the Oberursel faculty (1946–1968), wrote “*Luther und die Frauenordination*” (“Luther and the Ordination of Women”). Written in 1973, this article opposing the ordination of women was republished in

1983 in a theological anthology. Dr. Stolle's most recent, "*Luther, das 'Amt' und die Frauen,*" bears in its title a definite resemblance to Dr. Kirsten's.

Stolle begins this essay citing Luther works which are clearly laid out between the years 1521 to 1538. This removes the suggestion that the "early," "middle," or the "late" Luther is quoted to the advantage or the disadvantage of the other. He does locate conflicting Luther statements very much in the way he does Paul's in his New Testament essay. Citations are offered supporting both views: (1) Luther does not allow women pastors (*Deus committit officium praedicanda viro* (p. 4). (2) On the other hand, Luther's view that the baptized are entrusted with the priestly office (*sacerdotium*) removes any distinction between men, women, and children in regard to preaching Christ (pp. 4–6). For Luther, service (*diakonia*) provides the basis for both the priesthood and the priestly office and binds them together as one (p. 7). The same approach is taken in his New Testament essay (p. 72). In the light of "service" Luther's other statements must be understood.

Dr. Stolle's main argument is that Luther's statements limiting the ministerial office to certain men can be explained by the reformer's applying the norms of society to the definition of the pastoral office. Apart from baptism, nothing in the ministerial office presents an impediment or imposes limitations. Whatever arguments Luther took from the Bible or nature (biological differences between men and women) were used only to support what society allowed at that time. Women did not lack qualifications for the ministry, but society's view that they were subordinate to men prevented this. He maintains that Luther was a child of his times. Where society no longer sees things this way, this obstacle is removed.

Professor Stolle is not slack in providing Luther citations. Fathers and mothers in preaching Christ to their children are called "apostles, bishops, priests" (p. 9). So he finds that "the establishment of the office of preaching the gospel and the sending of Christ does not require that women be excluded" (p. 11). Only the conventions of society, which go back to the beginning of time, prevent women from being pastors (pp. 10, 12). Contradictions in Luther allowing and prohibiting women holding the pastoral office are explained by his particular theological (social/political) situation. So against the papacy, he saw ministry common to all Christians.

Luther completely reversed himself in his controversies with the fanatics. Women were required to keep silent and not allowed to preach. Luther was not rigid on this. A certain duchess was within her rights to address the bishop of Meissen. "If they do not want to listen to men, they will have to listen to women and let children speak to them" (pp. 14–15). For Luther in his conflict with the fanatics "the New Testament office of the ministry is no longer drawn from the gathering of Christians, but from certain office holders in the church" (*bestimmte Amtstraeger in der Kirche*).

Now the meaning of *office* for Luther was determined by the command making women subordinate to men and not strictly in the New Testament sense, which he also championed. What both nature and God taught about society Luther applied to his view of ministry. What Dr. Stolle calls "the christological-ecclesiologi-

cal dimension" was no longer prominent. Excluding women from the ministry is no more than a by-product of the divisions in society of the declining Middle Ages where such a view was rooted. For Luther societal regulations (*ordo oeconomicus; Haus/Familienordnung*) ruled. Luther was not completely rigid, as unmarried women were excluded from the rule requiring silence (pp. 16–19).

Dr. Stolle takes issue with Professor Kirsten's essay in making no attempt to integrate conflicting Luther citations, but in using only those demonstrating his own opposition to women's ordination (p. 21). Let Dr. Stolle speak for himself: "Essential ingredients in Christ's sending and the spiritual reality of the congregation never provide Luther with any basis for excluding women from the pastoral office (*kirchlichem Amt*)." "Luther's arguments for excluding women from the pastoral office reveal an essential part of his understanding of society, which was related to a certain time, and hence they were time-bound (*zeitgebunden*). From this it follows the ordination of women does not present itself as a rupture in the doctrinal tradition of the Lutheran Church, so far as Luther can be considered as normative" (p. 22).

One could address Dr. Stolle's arguments at several places. At face value, ordaining women is a rupture in Lutheran church practice as it is among the catholic churches of the east and the west. We have not done it before. The Anglican Communion has been disrupted over this issue, and there is no reason to think that matters will be better for confessional Lutherans.

Stolle has provided sufficient Luther citations. Attempting to resolve the differences by searching for more has no value. Quantity here is useless. His citations, however, prove too much. Did Luther really believe that children and not only women could be apostles, bishops, and priests? We know what Luther thought about the claims of the fanatics to speak for God. To him it would be sacrilegious or even blasphemous to claim that anyone including himself could be an apostle. It is evident that Luther was speaking of the ability of the word spoken by any Christian to convert. A word that converts is more powerful than the words of consecration. Unbelief is a greater obstacle to overcome than consecrating inanimate bread as the body of Christ (p. 4). Speaking the word of God does not suggest that the speaker is a priest or an apostle.

When Dr. Stolle speaks of the regulations between men and women dating to the dawn of time, he may himself be acknowledging that we are dealing with more than time-bound (*zeitgebunden*) cultural norms. What began in creation and was common until the 1500s may not be able to be explained merely as a "time-bound" regulation of culture.

There is also the problem of the use of language. Luther was not the first to use hyperbole. Without being aware of rhetorical exaggeration, we could conclude from Luther that there should be no ministerial office at all and that anyone regardless of age, gender, or abilities be considered. Ordain babies! Of course, the larger problem is Dr. Stolle's attempt to find the real Luther by stripping him of his cultural accretions. Supporters of the ordination of women have done this with Paul. Can we explain Luther's other teachings in this way (*zeitgebunden*)? Some find his Lord's Supper too medieval. Justification by faith is said to result from his own internal psychological dilemma.

Professor Stolle's conclusions on women ministers are only possible because he sees the ministry as simply the extension of baptism. Being baptized grants the ministry—or at least it entitles the baptized to the ministry. Bishop Jobst Schoene follows the Lutheran Confessions in finding the origins of ministry in Jesus' call of the apostles.

Everyone who operates "from below" will have to find reasons for not ordaining women. Professor Stolle has found none in Luther. His challenge involves questions other than the one about ordaining women, but it is this one we will first confront.

*Editor's note: At the time of this writing, the most recent issue of Lutheran Theological Journal, published by Luther Seminary of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA), reportedly contains an article by Norman Habel calling for the ordination of women. A one-time member of the LCMS ministerium, Habel served as a professor of Old Testament at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Habel has since become a member of the LCA and a member of its seminary board while he serves as a professor at a state college in Adelaide. A copy of the issue was not available when we went to print.*

*The Reverend Dr. David P. Scaer  
Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana  
January 28, 1995*

## LITURGICAL HERMENEUTICS

*The Reverend Dr. John Kleinig of Luther Seminary, Adelaide, Australia, outlined "Some Theological Principles for the Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures," which was published in the August 1993 issue of Lutheran Theological Journal, pp. 73–79. The following is a sample from this piece, which is worth investigating and discussing.*

### The Importance of Liturgical Context in Interpretation

- a. The books of the Old and New Testament were canonized for reading and teaching in the divine liturgy of the church.
- b. The church thereby acknowledged that, since these writings contained the prophetic and apostolic word of God, they did not just address their original audience in its particular historical setting, but spoke to the church of all times and in all places.
- c. The proper setting for the canonical Scriptures is therefore the corporate worship of the church, for the same Triune God who founded divine worship and the liturgical community by his word continues to address and to deal graciously with his people through that word.
- d. The Holy Scriptures are applied and interpreted properly when they are used by the people of God in the following ways:
  1. by the church when it determines from them how to arrange its worship and how to worship the Triune God;
  2. by the congregation when it hears and heeds the word of God spoken to it in the readings from Holy Scripture;
  3. by the pastors when they proclaim that word effectually as law and gospel to the assembled congregation and when

they either warn or comfort the saints personally in their pastoral care of them;

4. by the people of God as they meditate on it and let it shape their faith and life;
  5. by the teachers of the church as they study it to determine the full counsel of God for his people and his whole creation.
- e. The Scriptures are therefore applied correctly when they are used to show how the same Lord Jesus who taught and healed the people of Israel continues to teach and heal his people through the means of grace in the worship of the church (Acts 1:1–2).

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

*What You Read and Where You Read It.* I often take along some reading material for company wherever I go. It isn't the best way to *study* a book, but it helps to pass the time at restaurants and during meeting recesses. Grabbing whatever is close at hand, I have on occasion set out without considering how the *title* of the book might affect passersby. Once I got strange looks at the Chinese buffet because I was nose deep in Os Guinness's *Dining With the Devil* while spooning in some wonton soup. Then there was the time I was perusing David Wells's *No Place for Truth* while waiting for the rest of the voters to assemble at a regular meeting. I've thought about keeping a spare dust jacket from Luther's Works on hand to slip over the latest reading material so I won't have to worry about those who would judge me by the cover of my books, but maybe I'll just have to satisfy myself with rereading the backs of sugar packets instead.

*Spiritual Soul Music?* In a rather passing reference, Gert Haendler notes a bit of congregational music history that sounds remarkably like today's situation. On pages 93–94 of his *Luther On Ministerial Office and Congregational Function* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981) he writes: "The Rostock preacher Heinrich Müller, for example, lamented the fact that so few members of the congregation sang along at worship services. He therefore published in 1659 a hymnal entitled *Spiritual Soul Music* which was intended to serve the needs of the congregation." (See *Geistliche Seelenmusik* reprinted in Chr. Bunnens, *Kirchenmusik und Seelenmusik* [Berlin, 1966] pp. 113–167.)

Theophil Grossgebauer "thought that church music restricted the independence of the congregation. There had been antiphonal singing earlier, but by 1660 music was being played by paid musicians. 'It roars, resounds, rumbles, saws away, rings, and concertizes—but you never know what it is.'" (See Karl Schmaltz, *Kirchengeschichte Mecklenburgs* [Berlin, 1952] 3:22.) Perhaps one of our readers who has the skills and the resources might track down more of this for us?

*Eccentric Ecclesia.* One mark of adolescence is: "I don't have to do it that way. I can do it a different way, my own way." The CTCR document speaks with the same sort of attitude, imagining all sorts of possible ways that things might be done with regard to various services rendered in congregations. A view toward possibilities eas-

ily becomes eccentric. The pursuit of possibilities sets off a chain reaction of consequences and requires a tweaking of definitions and terms all along the way.

It is entirely possible to view the boards of a congregation as a bureaucracy, an administrative realm, an organizational kingdom. This, however, was not the intent of Acts 6:1–7, and it need not be the inescapable outcome of LCMS congregations today. Christocentricity directs us toward something different than bureaucratic novelties. True, one may be free to enumerate congregational offices and boards with great variety. There may be no Scripture proof text to prohibit it. There may be no regulation or bylaw against such diversity. There may be no stricture excluding the proliferation of congregational megastructures which, when “properly” defined, are indifferent to gender. The issue, however, is not whether there is a law against it, but whether the Gospel is for it. Where the church is centered around people scheduling chicken dinners, singles retreats, and fundraisers, there authority takes the shape of whatever the body has deemed it to be. Where the church is people gathered around its center, Jesus Christ, in Word and Sacrament, there authority is conformed to what the Head has instituted. What then of presidents and elders?

*How God is Praised.* “Praise Songs” seem to be the rage in a growing number of LCMS congregations. Is the obvious being overlooked? Has anybody asked whether praise songs really praise God? Of all the surveys and opinion polls taken, of all the thousands who have been asked, “What kind of music would you like in the worship service?” has anybody thought to ask what it is that the Lord Almighty prefers?

The basic question: How *is* God praised? Is he praised with the mere intoning of the words “Praise God!”? Is he praised when people are imposing their tastes and preferences upon the divine service? Perhaps we ought to ask whether praise has its emphasis in what we do for God or what he has done and is doing for us. Is it not possible that God is the more greatly praised when broken hearts are receiving Christ’s body and blood than when voices are belting out toe-tapping communal karaoke choruses of “Let’s just praise the Lord”?

JAB

## ELCA: CONCERNING THE CONFESSION

*The Feast of St. Thomas 1994 marked the inception of a mailing to promote 9.5 theses Concerning the Confession of the Faith in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Pr. Louis A. Smith of Collingswood, New Jersey spearheaded this endeavor, which was cosigned by eight others (Prs. Phillip Max Johnson, Jersey City, NJ; Ronald B. Bagnall, Trenton, NJ; Linda Sue Larson, Cresskill, NJ; John David Larson, Cresskill, NJ; Richard J. Niebank, Delhi, NY; Beth A. Schlegel, Trenton, NJ; Mark A. Hoffman, Moorestown, NJ).*

*The draft was then sent to seventy-five other potential signatories who were also asked to contribute \$35 to the cause by January 18*

*so that a copy of the document could be mailed to the entire ELCA clergy roster and printed in such Lutheran journals as Lutheran Forum, Dialog, The Lutheran Quarterly, Pro Ecclesia, LOGIA, and The Lutheran Commentator. By the time this issue is read by you, initial results should be in. If you would like to enquire into the matter after reading these theses, please contact Pr. Louis A. Smith, c/o St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, Park and Dill Aves., Collingswood, NJ 08108, or phone him at (609) 854-0860.*

**T**o the people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, “who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood,” and to their pastors: “May grace and peace be yours in abundance” (1 Peter 1:2).

The ELCA is in a crisis—a crisis of faith. The critical question is whether the church will prove faithful to the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures and the catholic creeds and evangelical confessions, or fall into apostasy—a fall which could go either to the right or to the left. Many in the ELCA tilt toward the right—the ideologies of enthusiasm, fundamentalism, nationalism, and pietism. Many others lean toward the left—the ideologies of activism, feminism, advocacy. This results in the appearance of a conservative versus liberal struggle, but this appearance is an illusion. The real struggle is for faithful adherence to the Scriptures, creeds and confessions over against their subordination to these social or religious ideologies.

Whenever such ideologies prevail, the Word of God is silenced among us and driven out of the Church, and our people, left to their own devices, are deprived of that true consolation which comes from “the Gospel of God . . . concerning his Son . . . Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 1:1 ff.).

Praying for the Church, rejoicing in the Gospel, convicted by the Word of God, we offer the following theses, that our confession of the Faith might address the current crisis directly and honestly. Our pastoral office compels us to speak.

### 1. THE REVELATION AND NAME OF THE HOLY TRINITY

*When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. (John 15:26)*

“Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims, praises, worships” no other God than the LORD God of Israel, revealed in and named by Jesus Christ as “the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Te Deum, Matthew 28:19; Augsburg Confession I)

WE REJECT the false teaching that the naming of God as Father is a human construct to be understood on the analogy of human fatherhood; that it designates Israel’s God as male; that the trinitarian name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is inherently oppressive to human beings in general or women in particular; or that substituting triadic terms is adequate.

THE WORD OF GOD is silenced among us and driven out of the Church whenever the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is ignored, minimized, marginalized, suppressed, or altered in the Church’s preaching and praying, baptizing and confessing.

## 2. THE BONDAGE OF HUMANITY TO SIN

*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned.* (Romans 5:12)

The Church confesses “that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves” (*Lutheran Book of Worship*—“Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness”; Augsburg Confession II, XVIII, XIX)

WE REJECT the false teaching that would place ultimate hope in human goodness and self-fulfillment, that would confuse sin with failure or lack of virtue, that would exchange confession of our sin before God for self-analyses of perceived human problems.

THE WORD OF GOD is silenced among us and driven out of the Church whenever we sinners are not held accountable before the holy and righteous God.

## 3. THE PERSON AND WORK OF GOD THE SON

*Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He was revealed in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.* (1 Timothy 3:16)

The Church confesses and believes in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, “the eternal Son of the Father,” crucified and raised for the salvation of the world, “worthy of all worship” (*Te Deum*, Augsburg Confession III).

WE REJECT the false teaching that would separate the man Jesus from the risen Christ, and diminish his particular identity by “re-imagining” him as female, speaking of him as androgynous, or using him as a “Christ-principle.” We also reject the false teaching that Christ is for Christians only, that he is but one savior among many, that faith is salutary apart from the particular work of Christ.

THE WORD OF GOD is silenced among us and driven out of the Church whenever, under the guise of a false pluralism, we do not boldly proclaim the man Jesus Christ, the Jew from Nazareth, as the unique and universal Savior, the One for the many.

## 4. THE PROCLAMATION OF FORGIVENESS, LIFE AND SALVATION

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.* (Ephesians 2:8)

The Church “acknowledges one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins,” in which God has justified the ungodly and promised salvation from sin and death, from devil and hell, and from God’s own law and wrath, “and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers” (Nicene Creed; *Te Deum*, Augsburg Confession III and IV).

WE REJECT the false teaching that would replace God’s eschatological salvation with therapeutic rejuvenation, material well-being, social transformation, the spread of provisional human justice, or other good and desirable effects in what unbelief would label “the real world.”

THE WORD OF GOD is silenced among us and driven out of the Church when the singular and specific promise of the Gospel

is traded for the promise of some worldly good or the plans and pleas for human betterment.

## 5. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE MEANS OF GRACE

*So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.* (Romans 10:17)

The Church confesses and believes in “the Holy Spirit, Advocate and Guide,” who “calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church” through, and only through, God’s means of grace, which is the preaching of the Word—i.e., through Scripture, sermon, Baptism, Absolution, and Communion (*Te Deum*; Small Catechism—Creed—Article III; Augsburg Confession V, IX–XIII).

WE REJECT the false teaching that the Holy Spirit is given apart from the preached Word and sacraments, that the Holy Spirit is evidenced by human enthusiasm or activism, that the Holy Spirit is to be equated with the dynamic of social, political and spiritual movements. We reject the false teaching that the Church grows through human ingenuity and energy. We reject the false teaching that God’s liturgy is a tool for the advancement of political, cultural or therapeutic programs. We reject the elevation of organizational success, growth in numbers, and political and therapeutic activity to the status of marks of the Church.

THE WORD OF GOD is silenced among us and driven out of the Church when the true means of grace—the preaching of the Word and the sacraments—no longer defines, structures and centers the ministry and mission of the Christian congregation.

## 6. THE VOCATION OF THE BAPTIZED AND GOOD WORKS

*For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, to be our way of life* (Ephesians 2:10).

The Church confesses that the faithful are “bound to bring forth fruits—that is, the good works mandated by God” in the Ten Commandments, and done for God’s sake alone (Augsburg Confession VI, XVI, XX).

WE REJECT the false teaching that would elevate advocacy for self-chosen high-visibility causes above the common participation of Christians in the life of the world as husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, employers, workers, artists, teachers, doctors, lawyers, politicians, etc.

THE WORD OF GOD is silenced among us and driven out of the Church whenever the daily vocation of Christians is denigrated.

## 7. THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH CATHOLIC

*For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.* (1 Corinthians 12:13)

The Church “believes in one holy catholic and apostolic Church,” “the Body of Christ,” which is the congregation of the faithful gathered by the Holy Spirit to hear the preached Word and sacraments (Nicene Creed; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12 ff; Augsburg Confession VII).

WE REJECT the false teaching of a North American liberal Christianity that would substitute a politically-devised multiculturalism or inclusivism for the Church's true catholic unity in the preached Word and sacraments. We reject the false teaching of a North American conservative Protestantism that would substitute an invisible, spiritual experience of fellowship for the concrete reality of the preached Word and sacraments.

THE WORD OF GOD is silenced among us and driven out of the Church whenever the visible unity of the churches is not actively pursued in terms of the true God-given unity of the Church in Word and Sacrament.

### 8. THE PROPER DISTINCTION BETWEEN LAW AND GOSPEL

*For 'no human being will be justified in his sight' by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.* (Romans 3:20)

The Church teaches that both law and gospel must continually be preached in the congregation of the faithful: the law to convict people of sin and to promote God's temporal justice, the gospel to forgive people of sins and to proclaim God's eternal righteousness (Apology of the Augsburg Confession IV).

WE REJECT the false teaching that would identify God's law with achievable human goals rather than as the call to repent from sin and to amend one's life before the holy God. We reject the false teaching that would redefine God's gospel as a freedom which allows individuals to fulfill themselves and to do whatever pleases them.

THE WORD OF GOD is silenced among us and driven out of the Church whenever it is no longer held that God Almighty who created everything and gave us his law is the one God who redeemed the creation and renews it through his Holy Spirit.

### 9. THE HOLY MINISTRY

*Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries* (1 Corinthians 4:1)

The Church teaches that the holy Ministry is the divinely instituted public office of preaching the Word and sacraments in the congregation of the faithful (Augsburg Confession V, XIV, XXVIII; cf. *Occasional Services*—"Ordination").

WE REJECT THE FALSE TEACHING that would define the holy Ministry as a "helping profession," and so turn bishops and pastors into psychological counselors or social activists. We reject the false teaching that would fragment the one divinely instituted Ministry into so-called specialized ministries, as if the circumstances of ministry determine its content and practice. We reject the false teaching that ordained ministers are not subject to an exemplary standard in their conduct and relationships, or that they may excuse immoral behavior by an appeal to privacy or gospel freedom.

THE WORD OF GOD IS SILENCED AMONG US AND DRIVEN OUT OF THE CHURCH whenever the holy Ministry becomes a loosely defined service to people rather than the specific divine call to serve the Word of God, and whenever bishops and pastors are not encouraged to adorn the holy Ministry with holy lives.

### 9.5 [Conclusion]

*We believe that you will come and be our judge. Come, then, Lord, and help your people, bought with the price of your own blood, and bring us with your saints to glory everlasting.* (Te Deum)

Almighty God, grant to your Church your Holy Spirit and the wisdom which comes down from heaven, that your Word may not be bound but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, that in steadfast faith we may serve you and in the confession of your name may abide to the end; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Lutheran Book of Worship*—Matins and Vespers).

## THE SCENT OF A FLOWER WE KNOW

"To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life" (2 Cor 2:16). Jeffery Neal Larson has become known to many for his pen and ink illustrations, most recently in the prayer book *For All the Saints*, offered through the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau. Larson's illustrations now move from printing to recording—from paper to tape—in his recording *The Scent of a Flower We Know*, volume 1.

The "Flower," calling to mind Luther's rose, is the Lutheran Church. The "Scent" is the hint of what this music hopes to achieve. His main intention with this project is to encourage the use of the arts in a way which confesses that "we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing" (2 Cor 2:15).

This cassette recording consists of selections entitled "Fortress" (prelude), an instrumental into which is weaved the melody of Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Then follow "Salvation Unto Us Has Come," a non traditional setting of this hymn for the church and to the world; "Come Unto Me," the text of Matthew 11:28–30; "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word," Luther's hymn accompanied by acoustic guitar; "The Cheerful Garden," an instrumental inspired by Luther's description of heaven as a cheerful garden in a letter to his little son, Hans; "Jester's Return," an instrumental recalling Luther's words "I shall for the time being become a court jester"; "Water and the Word," baptismal devotion; "In, With, and Under," a hymn for the Lord's Supper; "I Shall not Die, But Live," the text of Psalm 118:17; "Angels of Heaven," a cradle hymn in the Lutheran tradition; and "Fortress" (postlude), the closing instrumental incorporating Luther's "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come."

Larson notes that Luther remarked: "We sing as well as we can here at table and afterward. If we make a few blunders, it is really not your fault but our ability, which is still very slight even if we have sung [the piece] over two or three times."

A copy of this professionally produced cassette is available for \$7 postpaid. Make your checks out to Jeffery Larson and mail to 37645 Farwell Drive, Fremont, CA 94536. Volume 2 should be ready by the end of 1995. Larson plans for the two volumes to be included on a single compact disc at that time. In the Trinity issue of LOGIA Forum we plan to include an essay by Larson entitled "Except for Rituals."

JAB

