

# LOGIA

A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY



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Sacrament  
des Altars



## COMMUNIO IN SACRIS

EPIPHANY 1996

VOLUME V, NUMBER 1

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

## FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

AC [CA]	Augsburg Confession
AE	Luther's Works, American Edition
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
BSLK	<i>Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche</i>
Ep	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
FC	Formula of Concord
LC	Large Catechism
LW	Lutheran Worship
SA	Smalcald Articles
SC	Small Catechism
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
Tappert	<i>The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church</i> . Trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TLH	<i>The Lutheran Hymnal</i>
Tr	Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
Triglotta	<i>Concordia Triglotta</i>
WA	<i>Luthers Werke</i> , Weimarer Ausgabe [Weimar Edition]

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**THE COVER ART** features two woodcut illustrations as well as typography from the *Deudsch Catechismus* (Wittenberg: Georg Rhaw, 1530).

Each of the Commandments, the Articles, and the Petitions, as well as Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Confession in this edition of the German Catechism are illustrated with woodcuts. The woodcut on the upper left of the cover accompanies the Sacrament of the Altar, while the woodcut on the lower right goes with the First Petition. Together they illustrate Altar and Pulpit Fellowship.

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# CORRESPONDENCE



## ■ To the Editors:

Regarding “The Problem with A Mighty Fortress” in LOGIA Forum (LOGIA, Trinity 1995, 67), let me say I’m glad you discovered the outstanding pastoral theology work of Charles Merrill Smith, *How to be a Bishop Without Being Religious*.

I discovered this gem of literature over thirty years ago. Although somewhat cynical, it is right on target for those of us who must work with the run-of-the-mill of standard-brand Protestants.

When you get to the hymnody and worship, it is even more confusing, because much of what was rich in a Gospel tradition of communication has been eliminated hundreds of years ago in continental Europe, and thus the axe and the moving van have done their work (in taking things out).

We can only say with an old sage, “they have another spirit.”

Louis G. Bier  
Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church  
Boston, MA

## ■ To the Editors:

Readers of Clarence Priebsenow’s “Baptism in the New Testament” (LOGIA, Trinity 1995) may have noted his initial reference to my *Born Again: By Water and the Word!* Bible study series from Concordia. The Bible study is based on the much more comprehensive treatment in *Baptized Into God’s Family: The Doctrine of Infant Baptism for Today*, available from Northwestern Publishing House (call (800) 662-6022 in the U.S.). For a brief and convenient one-page summary, see the *Lutheran Witness* (November 1992), 5. Finally, for a fairly detailed treatment of Luke’s view of Baptism in Acts, please see “Acts 8: Water Baptism and the Spirit,” in the April 1993 *Concordia Journal*, which I also summarized briefly in the *Lutheran Witness* (November 1994), 6–7. I published this array of materials in order to provide convenient and useful tools for pastors and lay people on infant baptism, the charismatic “baptism of the Spirit,” and baptism in general. My prayer is that they will be a service to the church and to our dear Lord who gave us this precious gift!

A. Andrew Das  
Richmond, VA

## 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/ounter-response exchanges, whereas our Correspondence section is a place for shorter “Letters to the Editors.”

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

# Robert David Preus

## In Memoriam

1924–1995



IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT MANY WHO GRIEVE FOR ROBERT DAVID PREUS HAVE CALLED HIM “THE GREATEST theologian of the twentieth century.” The first to regret and distance himself from such an epithet would be Robert Preus. Not only in humility, but in a stern appraisal of himself, he would have pointed to more than a few others who could better wear that mantle. Robert would, we are quite sure, be quick to label the hasty assessment “greatest theologian of the twentieth century” as cheap triumphalism and would prefer the true theology of the cross, of persecution, and suffering that he had known the last few years more sorely than ever before.

We do not intend here to glorify Robert Preus; rather, as his son-in-law Steven Briel did in his funeral sermon, we want to remember Robert Preus as one who knew he was a sinner and who reveled in God’s grace, and as one who led many of us deeper into a lively and earnest commitment to the Lutheran Confessions.

As a young pastor in 1953, Preus preached a sermon at the centennial convention of the Norwegian Synod that came to be known as the “Our Mission As A Remnant” sermon. In it he expressed a commitment that characterized the rest of his life and that was also the principle that rubbed off on many of his students:

The church of God must be content to remain a struggling, militant minority. Thus it has always been and always will be. God will have it no other way. . . . Remember, our rightness or wrongness, our success or failure will never be measured by counting noses, but by something which will stand forever and will judge men on the last day: the Word of God.

In the last years Preus knew, more than many, what it meant to be alone. Even in the world of conservative Lutherans where he had many admirers, many supporters, and many ready to go to the block with him, he still understood from harsh reality Herman Sasse’s “lonely Lutheran.”

All but the first ten years of Preus’s theological service were spent in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. But his influence and legacy are certainly not to be sought in that parochial a context. It is not made less parochial simply by connecting him to the Norwegians (although the influence in Missouri of the Norwegian Preus brothers is going to be a fascinating dissertation for someone someday). Preus’s confessional influence extends into world Lutheranism—Scandinavia, the Baltics, some of the former Soviet republics, Germany, Africa, and the Lutheran Churches in the Orient.

Had Preus been removed from the scene ten or fifteen years ago, there would have been reason to wonder whether or not his influence would not quickly dissipate. But because of Preus’s indefatigable efforts during the last decade for confessional Lutheranism, both as President of Concordia Fort Wayne and as the ousted martyr, his place in theological history and the extent of his influence is that much more assured. Many of his disciples are at least as tenacious and contentious as their teacher and are not likely to be potted plants. The irony is surely not lost on any, except possibly those who pushed Preus out of his office, that his martyrdom insured his continuing influence, and indeed, gave it a sharpness of focus that it might not otherwise have had.

Robert Preus, through the Luther Academy, was the publisher of *LOGIA*. He did not control the content of the journal, though he could be a tenacious proponent for his ideas in editorial staff meetings. Preus understood the necessity of an independent journal, not constrained in the way of the journals that are seminary house organs. Because he believed in that kind of independence, Preus let his control and influence over *LOGIA* stop with a persistent advocacy—for which the editors are more than a little grateful.

By calling itself a “free conference in print,” *LOGIA* intends to continue to contend for the unabashed confessionalism that Robert Preus promoted. Blessed be his memory.

*LOGIA* will publish a memorial issue this summer, in which some of Preus’s friends and colleagues will be asked to begin to assess his significance for confessional Lutheran theology.

ETT



# Communion in Holy Things in the Old Testament

ALAN LUDWIG



TO COVER IN DEPTH WHAT THE OLD TESTAMENT TEACHES ABOUT communion in holy things would require a large volume, perhaps several. Only a survey is possible here. Furthermore, the Old Testament has no single semantic root like the Greek *κοινωνεῖν* to express communion with God or his holy things.<sup>1</sup> Yet even without a single comprehensive term, such communion is indicated in the Old Testament in a variety of ways.

I shall set forth evidence to illustrate the following points: (1) God constitutes and communes with his holy people through holy things. (2) Communion in holy things, being first of all communion with God, brings about communion among his holy people. (3) Holy things are for holy people. They cannot be shared by the unholy, or misused, without serious consequences. (4) Holy people are to have no communion with the unholy. In the course of demonstrating these points, translations of biblical texts, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

First, an apology of this study.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Is hearing what the Old Testament says about holy things anything more than an attempt to satisfy an arcane historical curiosity? Granted, the thought world of Old Testament holiness is alien to us in many respects. Yet the Old Testament teaching on this topic is most relevant, for the simple reason that it furnishes the background for what the New Testament says. The holy apostles, and indeed our Lord himself, did not speak in a vacuum. As the Lord Jesus told us, he came not to abolish the Law and the prophets, but to fulfill (Mt 5:17). After his resurrection, he directed his disciples to find him in, of all places, the Old Testament Scriptures (Lk 24:25–27, 44–47). A careful reading of St. Paul's letters, especially 1 Corinthians, shows that the apostle never pulled his doctrine out of thin air, but faithfully passed on to the churches what he had received—not only from the Lord Jesus, but also from the sacred Scriptures. The same is true with the other apostolic writers, as evidenced by their frequent appeal to Holy Writ. All of them operate with the premise that the children of Israel are our forefathers, and that what is written of them is for our learning and wisdom unto salvation (1 Cor 10:1; Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:15–16). So when, for example, St. Paul warns, “He who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the body” (1 Cor 11:29), he

speaks not off the top of his head, but rather presupposes the Old Testament teaching on holy things and applies it to the new situation in Christ.

In our day many have forgotten this. The early church faced the heretic Marcion, and so her awareness of the vital connection between the Testaments was heightened as she battled his false teaching that the Old Testament with its crude materialism and its wrathful Creator God was inferior to parts of the New. Marcion and his doctrine were repudiated and condemned. Alas, one must conclude that Marcion lost the battle but won the war. If few are guilty of blatant Marcionism, many today are *de facto* Marcionites in their relegating the Old Testament to obsolescence or at least non-relevance; in their belief that the Old Testament God is only a God of wrath, as opposed to the New Testament God of love; in their theology, which is anti-incarnational and anti-sacramental in deed if not in word; in their casual, even profane treatment of holy things; and in their departure from the ancient, faithful practices of church fellowship.<sup>2</sup> All this may well be the result of having snipped the New Testament flower from its Old Testament stem and root.

Now, it is true that in Christ the Law has been fulfilled (Col 2:14, 16–17). Fulfillment, however, is not abolition. Far from having nothing to say to us, the Old Testament points us to Christ and shows us how in him an even greater holiness applies. If we are to recover a truly biblical understanding and practice regarding the holy things of the new and better covenant, it behooves us to sit again at the feet of Moses and the prophets and hear what the thrice-holy LORD of Sabaoth says to our Israelite forefathers. Only then can we grasp the apostolic teaching and regain an appreciation for the early church's informed practice.

## COMMUNION WITH THE HOLY GOD

When we consider the holiness of Old Testament Israel, “Be holy as I am holy” (Lv 11:44) may be the first thing that comes to mind. But this is the secondary aspect of holiness, one that flows from communion with the holy LORD. Holiness is above all God's gift to his people.<sup>3</sup> The first time the root קדש is used of Israel is in the context of the exodus from Egypt.

And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now, therefore, if you will listen [שמע] to my voice and keep [שמר] my covenant, you will be my own possession among all peo-

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ples; for all the earth is mine. And you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a *holy nation*. These are the words you shall speak to the children of Israel” (Ex 19:3–6).

In other words, the children of Israel are holy by virtue of the LORD’s delivering them from the bondage of Egypt and bringing them into relation with himself. This holiness is theirs by grace. The “if” clause, whose meaning tends to be obscured in the English versions, does not mean that Israel’s holiness is conditioned by their obedience. Rather, “hearing” and “keeping” are words directed to Israel’s faith (Ex 14:31): as believing Israel *hears* God’s Word and *keeps*, that is, *guards* (שמר) as a precious jewel His gracious covenant of deliverance—obeying the commandments flowing from this—they remain in the sphere of the LORD’s holiness and thus his holy people.<sup>4</sup> Moses in one of his final sermons makes quite clear the basis of Israel’s holiness: the LORD freely chose Israel to be his holy people, not because of any merit or worthiness in them.

For you are a holy people for the LORD your God; the LORD Your God chose you to be for him a people of prized possession from among all the peoples who are upon the face of the earth. Not because you were more numerous than all the peoples did the LORD set his love on you and choose you, for you were the least of all the peoples. Indeed, because the LORD loved you and because he kept the oath that he swore to Abraham, the LORD brought you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from a house of slaves, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt (Dt 7:6–8).

The LORD imparts himself and his holiness through means. The exodus was accomplished through Moses and other earthly means. As St. Paul writes, the Israelites, in passing from Egyptian slavery to the LORD’s freedom, were baptized into Moses. They were baptized in the elements of cloud and sea (1 Cor 10:1–2). The LORD sustained them in the wilderness with bread from heaven and water from the Christ-rock—“spiritual” (πνευματικόν) yet very material food and drink (1 Cor. 10:3–4). The exodus was a mediated deliverance.<sup>5</sup>

This salvific holiness, once for all accomplished in the exodus, is communicated to the people time and again—or, from another view, they are incorporated anew into it—through the LORD’s holy institutions: his holy Sabbath and festival days, his holy priesthood, his holy tabernacle/temple, his holy sacrifices. The richness of God’s manifold grace, conveyed to Israel through these means, is far too elaborate to discuss here. Salvation/deliverance/redemption (ישע, נצל, פדה, and other roots), atonement (כפר), forgiveness (נשא, סלח, and other roots), holiness (קדש), divine remembrance (זכר), and cleansing (טהר) are only a few of the Old Testament motifs used to express how a holy God creates, communes with, and keeps a holy people by means of holy things.<sup>6</sup>

One of the best examples of how the LORD communicates holiness to his people is the gift of his holy name. In a passage reminiscent of Exodus 19, Moses reiterates the LORD’s promise to make Israel his holy people:

And the LORD will establish you for himself a holy people, just as he promised you, if you keep [שמר] the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. Then all the peoples of the earth will see that the name of the LORD is called upon you [שם יהוה נקרא עליך], and they will fear you (Dt 28:9–10).

The standard English rendering “all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD” may give the impression that his name is a mere label chosen by men for themselves, as some people in our day choose to label themselves Christians. But it is much more than this. The LORD himself does the name-calling. For Israel to have the LORD’s holy name called upon them is to be in communion with him, to be the recipient of his gracious gifts and blessings—in other words, to be partakers of his holiness. Yet his holy name does not float free; it is securely located. This same expression is used in 1 Kings 8:43 and five times in Jeremiah 7 in connection with the temple of the LORD, the dwelling place of his name. In Deuteronomy 12 Moses speaks of the central sanctuary in the place where the LORD would choose to “put [שם] his name” or “cause his name to dwell” (Dt 12:5, 11, 21). This is nothing less than his gracious “tabernacling” presence among his people (Ex 25:8; Ez 43:7–9).<sup>7</sup> Not only has the LORD called his holy name upon the people once for all; not only does the name dwell among them in the sanctuary; this name is “put upon” (שם) the people again and again by the priests in the words of the Aaronic benediction—and thus Israel receives the LORD’s blessing (Nm 6:23–26).

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### *The LORD imparts himself and his holiness through means.*

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Most important is God’s holy word. Seldom in the Old Testament is the word of God called holy.<sup>8</sup> But then, neither is the ark of the covenant. Perhaps this is because the holiness of both is self-evident. The LORD instituted all his holy things by his word; his word is connected with all of them; by his word are they sanctified. This is why Israel’s status as God’s holy people is so closely linked to his covenant and commandments in passages such as Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 28. These words of God broadly encompass not only the “law” contents of the Torah, but the “gospel” as well, ranging from his instituted “means of grace” to his proclamation of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt (see Ex 12:24–27; 20:2). To continue in his Law, that is, his covenant and commandments and statutes, is to continue in communion with his holy name through his holy institutions; to depart from or despise this word is to profane his holy name and holy things (Lv 22:31–32; Ez 22:26).

### COMMUNION AMONG THE HOLY PEOPLE OF GOD

Communion with the holy LORD God through holy things brings about communion also among his holy people. This is demonstrated in the Levitical sacrifices. The overarching purpose of sac-

rifice is spelled out in Leviticus 17:11: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to atone for your lives. For the blood makes atonement for the life.”<sup>9</sup> As one scholar has said, “Peace with God is the goal of sacrifice.”<sup>10</sup> Old Testament sacrifice is greatly misunderstood if it is viewed in terms of merit. Instituted by God, these sacrifices are “sacramental”: that is, even though externally they are offered by men, it is God who works forgiveness through them. The sacrificial blood is the LORD’s atoning gift to man—a type of Jesus Christ, who as the perfect High Priest would offer himself up to God on the cross as the true and perfect propitiatory Sacrifice, shedding his lifeblood as the all-sufficient gift for the world’s redemption.<sup>11</sup>

Yet with the exception of the whole burnt offering (עֹלָה), which goes up in smoke entirely to God, the four other major kinds of sacrifice, the sin offering (חַטָּאת), the guilt offering (אֲשָׁמָה), the cereal offering (מִנְחָה), and the peace offering (זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים), have a horizontal dimension as well: they may be partaken of by persons. Of the first three of these, portions are shared by the priests. Through eating these “most holy” things, the priests share in the LORD’s holiness to the highest degree, and thus they are intimately linked with their fellows in the common life and holiness of God. This is partly what St. Paul had in mind when he wrote, “Observe Israel according to the flesh. Are not those who eat of the sacrifices communicants [κοινωνοὶ] of the altar?” (1 Cor 10:18).

The last type of sacrifice, the peace offering (or “communion offering”; NIV: “fellowship offering”), may be eaten also by the people. Although its *proprium* is not atonement for sin, it shares in this purpose (Lv 17:11; Ez 45:15).<sup>12</sup> The peace offering certainly has a vertical dimension, for, like the others, it is a “soothing aroma to the LORD” (Lv 3:5). This is further heightened in that the peace offering is regularly paired with the whole burnt offering, the comprehensive atoning sacrifice (Lv 1:4).<sup>13</sup> But the *proprium* of the peace offering is horizontal communion among men. It is no ordinary meal: it is a holy meal eaten in communion with the holy God (Lv 19:8; Nm 18:19; Dt 12:18). The forgiven ones, at peace with God, share together in the bond of peace. Similar dimensions are found in the Passover sacrifice, by means of which Israel participates in the LORD’s redemption through the blood on the doorpost and together partakes of this redemption through the meal (Exodus 12).<sup>14</sup>

Several Old Testament examples illustrate how the people of Israel, in communion with God, walk together in a unity brought about by “word and sacrament.” In Exodus 19, the LORD speaks to Moses, recounting how he has brought Israel out of Egypt and promising that if they hear his voice and keep his covenant, they will be his holy people. Then he says, “These are the words you shall speak to the children of Israel” (19:6).

So Moses went and called the elders of the people, and he set before them all these words that Yahweh had commanded him. And all the people answered together [יחדו] and said, “All that the LORD has spoken, we will do” (Ex 19:7–8).

First comes the hearing of the words of the LORD. These words are not only law in its theological sense of requirements or demands;

they are also “gospel,” the proclaiming of the LORD’s gracious deliverance. Israel’s unity and common commitment to walk in and do the LORD’s words are a response created by the word of deliverance. The living gospel words of the LORD sustain a communion of faith among the people.

In Exodus 24 this scene is repeated and augmented. First, the “Service of the Word.” Moses comes down from Mt. Sinai after receiving the Decalogue and other words from the LORD. He recounts them to the people. “And all the people answered with one voice [קָוִל שָׁחַד], ‘All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do’” (Ex 24:3). Then those who are united in the word receive the “sacrament.” Moses offers the covenant sacrifice, reads the words from the Book of the Covenant, and the people repeat their unanimous pledge to do them (24:4–7). So Moses sprinkles the people with the blood of the covenant (24:8), then the elders of Israel eat the covenant meal in communion with the God of Israel on the mountain (24:9–11).<sup>15</sup> Word of God and atoning sacrifice with meal bind the people of Israel with God and with one another. And so Israel “confesses the faith” in unity.

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***The people of Israel, in communion with God, walk together in a unity brought about by “word and sacrament.”***

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This covenant, founded as it is in the promise to Abraham and realized by the LORD alone, with no merit or cooperation on Israel’s part, is a covenant founded in grace. But it also contains conditions and demands; the law is added because of transgressions (Gal 4:19). Fulfillment of Israel’s promise, so joyfully and confidently made, never materializes. What the people desire to do, they cannot. Israel’s history is a steady stream of rebellion against the words of the LORD and of disunity among the people. Because of human depravity, this covenant is a “ministry of death” (2 Cor 3:7). Fulfillment of the nation’s failed promise awaits a new and perfect covenant with a perfect Fulfiller and Mediator (Rom 8:3–4; Hebrews 8–10), a testament of forgiveness through the flesh and blood of the perfect Sacrifice, unconditionally bestowed, with no pledge of obedience exacted (Mt 26:26–28). Still, after the exile, even after a history of failure, the “Divine Service of Word and Sacrament” continues. An outstanding occurrence is Ezra’s reading the Torah to the people—the LORD’s whole written revelation of law and gospel—before the Water Gate, where the people have gathered as “one man.” Repentance, worship, and rejoicing are effected through hearing the LORD’s words, then “sacramental” unity in the Feast of Booths (Nehemiah 8).

As the preceding examples have already shown, Israel’s unity is not a human achievement. Israel is never depicted as a “voluntary association of like-minded individuals.” Divinely wrought unity through means is not only the norm, but also the wave of



the future, as shown in the restoration promises of the prophets, which envision the future unity of Israel as a gift of grace. The LORD God says concerning Israel's return to the land:

"I will give them one heart [לֵב אֶחָד] and put a new spirit in them; I will remove the heart of stone from them and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may walk in my statutes and keep my judgments and do them; and they will be my people, and I will be their God" (Ez 11:19–20; cf. Jer 32:39).

This unity will be rooted in covenant, Davidic King, temple, sacrifice, priesthood, and gracious presence of the LORD (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezekiel 34, 37, 40–48)—that is, in the holy words of God and his holy institutions of grace. The Old Testament, then, with its own peculiar mode of expression, teaches that communion among God's future people in Christ too will come about as they commune with him through his holy word and sacraments.

### HOLY THINGS FOR HOLY PEOPLE

That God's holy things are for holy people is obvious to any casual reader of the Old Testament. I shall offer only a few examples.

The Passover well portrays how only the holy may partake of holy things. All Israel is to keep it. Household slaves may partake if they are circumcised, as well as circumcised foreigners who dwell in the land. "No uncircumcised male may eat of it" (Ex 12:43–49). (This regulation undoubtedly lies partly behind the early church's insistence that only the baptized may share in the Eucharist.)<sup>16</sup> Not even all within the household of the faith may partake. Those who are ceremonially unclean at the time of the Passover are forbidden to celebrate it. Instead, they are to keep the Passover a month later. Failure to do so—that is, to "despise the sacrament"—results in being cut off from one's people (Nm 9:6–14).

The other sacrifices are another case in point. While all Israel constitutes a holy nation, there are circles or grades of holiness among the people, as well as within holy time, holy space, and holy objects. These grades of holiness are too complex to discuss here.<sup>17</sup> Broadly speaking, the priesthood is the holiest class of people; the priests alone may eat the "most holy" sacrifices (קֹדֶשׁ קָדָשׁ, Nm 18:9–10). The holiness of these sacrifices is communicated to those who eat them (Lv 6:18, 27 [11, 20]). Thus they are to be eaten only in a holy place (Lv 6:16, 26 [9, 19]; 7:6; 10:13). This is "closed communion" indeed! Only the male descendants of Aaron who are ceremonially clean may partake of them. By contrast, the "holy" sacrifices (קֹדֶשִׁים, Lv 22:10)—that is, the portions of Israel's offerings that the LORD has designated for the priests (Nm 18:11–12)—may be eaten by members of the priest's household, male and female. There is no "drop-in communion" for visitors. Household guests and hired servants may not eat. "No outsider shall eat it" (Lv 22:10–13). Nor may unclean priests eat the holy things while in their unclean state (Lv 22:1–9). For the priests to act unlawfully toward the holy offerings is to profane the holy name of the LORD who makes them holy and thus bring severe guilt on

themselves (Lv 22:2, 9, 16). The same is true of the unclean lay person who eats the peace offering, which is otherwise given him to eat: he shall be cut off (Lv 7:21). Whether priest or layman, then, each may partake of the holy things only when in a holy state, and then only in the particular sphere of holiness to which he is assigned.

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*The priests have been charged with seeing to it that lay people do not unwittingly eat of the holy things not permitted them to eat and so bear guilt.*

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Who bears the responsibility of oversight in communion in the holy gifts? The priests. Not only are they responsible for teaching the people the distinctions between holy and unholy things (Lv 10:10–11; Ez 44:23), but they have been charged with seeing to it that lay people do not unwittingly eat of the holy things not permitted them to eat and so bear guilt (Lv 22:14–16). Truly the priests are "stewards of the mysteries of God. And it is required of a steward that one be found faithful" (1 Cor 4:1–2). The wicked conduct of Eli's sons and the punishment visited upon Eli's house—the sons for abusing their holy office and the father for looking the other way (1 Samuel 2)—reverberate across the ages as a warning for pastors, both the wicked and the indifferent.<sup>18</sup>

Nor may just anyone assume the office and duties of the holy priesthood. This is shown by one of the most terrible incidents in the Old Testament, the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. This rebellion is based on a half-truth. The rebels approach Moses and Aaron and say to them,

You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? (Nm 16:3).

Here we have the first adherents of "everyone a minister" ecclesiology. Because the LORD has said that all Israel is a holy nation and a kingdom of priests, reason Korah and friends, the office of the priesthood flows from the "priesthood of all believers" and is accessible to everyone. This business of Moses going alone to the top of the mountain to speak with the LORD and Aaron alone entering the Holy of Holies is sheer clericalism! Subsequent events, however, prove Korah and his company to be in grave theological error. On Moses' instructions they take censers and offer the holy incense before the LORD—something given only priests to do. The three ringleaders are swallowed up by the earth, while the rest of their company is consumed by fire (Nm 16:16–35). Assuming the office or the sacred duties of the priesthood without a divine call proves extremely hazardous to

the health! A similar fate befalls legitimate priests who use holy things illegitimately. Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu, who abuse their holy office by offering "strange fire" (זֶרַח שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר) before the LORD, that is, fire he has not commanded, die (fittingly) by fire (Lv 10:1–2). Yet abuse of the holy office and holy things cannot nullify their holiness: the censers used by Korah and his cronies remain holy and are fashioned into an altar covering (Nm 16:37–39).

The same patterns apply to holy space and time as to holy things and persons. Gradations of holiness, access limited to persons within the proper sphere of holiness, and consequences for misusing or despising the holy can be seen in connection with tabernacle and temple, with Sabbath and holy festivals. One example will suffice: holy space and time, holy persons and things all intersect on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). Only on this day (holy time) is there access to the Holy of Holies (holy space). Only the high priest (holy person) may enter, and only with the blood of the special sin offering for that day (holy thing). There is no record of the holiness of this space and time ever having been violated, but one can imagine the dreadful consequences had it been.

Yet these holy things do not operate mechanically by some immutable law. They remain always the LORD's holy things, through which he works according to his word and according to his mercy and wrath. In the face of the stringent regulations and warnings governing conduct toward the LORD's holy things, one is struck with his great forbearance toward human need and weakness. Examples include David and his men eating the holy bread of the presence, which the law does not permit them to eat (1 Sm 21:1–6), and men of the northern kingdom eating the Passover in an unclean state, yet with the LORD's approval in answer to Hezekiah's prayer (2 Chr 30:17–20), in the face of the Torah's prohibition.

Those who act not in ignorance or out of humble need, but presumptuously, do not fare so well. Besides the instances of stiff-necked rebellion cited above, there is poor Uzzah, the well-meaning man who, accompanying the ark of God on its return to Jerusalem, reaches out and touches it in order to steady it on the cart and is struck dead by the LORD (2 Sm 6:6–7). It should also be noted that the cases where God's wrath immediately breaks out upon despisers and abusers of holy things are quite rare in the whole scheme of things. Indeed, precisely because he is longsuffering and slow to carry out his threats, Israel often falls into the trap of supposing that the LORD's holy institutions work *ex opere operato*, securing his favor apart from repentant faith. Through his prophets the LORD frequently condemns this view (Is 1:10–15, for instance). Yet in the end judgment surely comes upon a faithless people who misuse those things intended for their blessing, as Israel's sad history shows. Thus when people today receive the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner and suffer no immediate harm, they do well to remember that this is not due to the inefficacy of the Lord's warning, but rather to his mercy (Rom 2:3–4).

The complex gradation of holiness in the Old Testament may seem not to apply in any way to us who are in Christ. In a sense it does not. Put simply, the graded scale of most holy—holy—clean—unclean—profane in the Old Testament is a scale

of salvation and life, sin and death. Sin, disease, and death make one impure and unholy to one degree or another; forgiveness, health, and life make one clean, holy, most holy.<sup>19</sup> But all of this in its imperfection and impotency pictures and anticipates the coming Deliverer; it cries out for the promised One who will come and destroy sin and death once for all. Indeed, Christ has come. He has fulfilled the holiness of the Law and opened the very Holy of Holies to all believers, for his cross is the whole of forgiveness and life for all eternity (Heb 10:19–20; 1 Jn 1:1–2). He is the holiness and wholeness that swallow up all grades of sin, disease, impurity, and death. In him even the profane and unclean have been restored to their pristine pre-fall state of "very good" (טוֹב מְאֹד, Gn 1:31; cf. Mk 7:19).<sup>20</sup> Those who have been baptized into him and incorporated into his holy church are holy (1 Cor 1:2), and in him there is no longer a graded scale of holiness.

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### *Christ's fulfilling all holiness does not abolish the boundaries between the holy and the unholy.*

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Yet Christ's fulfilling all holiness does not abolish the boundaries between the holy and the unholy: it marks them out all the more clearly. There is still the danger of profaning the most holy things of the new covenant and so incurring a judgment more severe than any ever meted out under the Law (Heb 10:26–31; 2 Pt 2:20–22). There still remains the call to Christ's holy ones to "touch not the unclean thing" (2 Cor 6:17)—which under the new covenant means not contamination by unclean animals or diseased or dead bodies, but defilement from sin and misbelief. Although the office of the holy ministry is not the holier estate that the office of the Old Testament priesthood was, there are still clear albeit different boundaries governing who may and may not hold this office and perform its duties (1 Cor 14:33–36; 1 Tim 2:12; 3:1–7; 5:22; Tit 1:5–9). Thus the New Testament is in line with the Old in its insistence that holy things are for holy people (Mt 5:23–24, 7:6; 1 Cor 11:27–31). Both Testaments affirm that the LORD's holy institutions are for salvation and blessing when rightly used. Men dare not profane them, or approach or partake of them in an unholy state. Nor may they have a share in them apart from the LORD's bidding to do so.

### **NO COMMUNION WITH THE UNHOLY**

It follows then that God's holy people are not to be in communion with the unholy: neither unholy worship nor unholy persons in the context of the divine service of holy things. Hence the repeated scriptural warnings for Israel not to share in pagan worship and practices. Though in certain areas of life Israelites can rub shoulders comfortably with the Gentiles, have them as friends, even participate in their affairs of state,<sup>21</sup> in no case are they permitted to participate in the Gentiles' idolatrous cults. The warnings of Moses and the prophets, Israel's refusal to heed

them, and the divine judgment that comes when they ignore these warnings are woven prominently through the fabric of the Old Testament. These hardly need to be set forth here. Sufficiently illustrative is Israel's "communing" with Moab in illicit worship by "attaching himself" (נצמד) to the Baal of Peor in the days of the wilderness wanderings and thus incurring divine wrath (Nm 25:3, 5).

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***The prophet who speaks his own opinion in the LORD's holy name is lumped together with the prophet who blatantly speaks in the name of other gods!***

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What needs to be underscored here is the connection between true and false worship and the word of God. It is commonly held that Israel's "orthodoxy" is centered in ritual and ethics and a simple creed of monotheism (or henotheism), as opposed to doctrine. There is truth to this if by "doctrine" one means abstract theological formulae. But even Israel's creed, the *Shema*, is not some minimalist confession of faith. Though less intricate than the later Christian creeds, "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one!" is linked before and after with *all* the words of the LORD (Dt 6:1–9) and his command to learn and teach them. The *Shema* is not the whole faith; it is the center—the "material principle"—of the faith. Indeed, the word of the LORD is doctrinal to the core: הוֹרָה means "teaching," "instruction." This Torah, this word with its commands and statutes and judgments and precepts, being as it is the one word of the one LORD God, is inviolable. Moses enjoins Israel thus:

And now, Israel, listen to the statutes and judgments I am teaching you to keep [שמר], in order that you may live, and enter and possess the land that the LORD God of Abraham is giving you. You shall not add to the word [הַדְבָר; note the singular] that I am commanding you, and you shall not take away from it, that you may keep [שמר] the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you (Dt 4:1–2).

Israel is to guard or hold fast (שמר) the pure, unadulterated word of God. It is this word, heard, treasured, and taught to children and children's children, clung to and carried out purely in worship and life, that will keep Israel in the true faith and from false gods (4:3–4, 9–10, 15–19). No word of God is optional; every word is essential to life (Dt 8:3). The LORD takes his pure word so seriously that he requires his people to listen to all, not just part of the words he speaks through his chosen prophet (Dt 18:15):

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from the midst of their brothers, and I will place my words in his mouth, and he will speak to them *all* that I command

him. And it will happen that the man who will not listen to my words that he speaks in my name, I will require it of him (Dt 18:18–19).<sup>22</sup>

On the prophet's end of things, a little false doctrine is as bad as a lot. The prophet who speaks his own opinion in the LORD's holy name is lumped together with the prophet who blatantly speaks in the name of other gods! Both are liable to the same divine censure and punishment (Dt 18:20; Jer 23:9–40).

The stakes are high. Pure word maintains right faith and holy worship; adulterated word leads to idolatry and profaning what is holy. The Old Testament's consistent either-or, black-or-white portrayal of true and false prophets, of faithful servants of God and idolaters, is to be viewed in this light. This can hardly be overstressed in our tolerant, ecumenical age, where the tendency is to depict doctrinal error in various shades of gray and to accept the light and medium grays as close enough to white. To put it another way: today, 100 percent doctrinal purity is an A (though impossible to attain); 90 percent is an A-; anything over 50 percent is passable. In the Old Testament, 100 percent is an A; 99 percent or lower is an F. The Old Testament teaching on this point—reflected also in the New Testament—is summed up accurately by the Small Catechism's explanation of the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer: "God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also live holy lives according to it" (SC III, 5).

It is against this backdrop that communion even within the commonwealth of Israel may be understood. Positively, the psalmist says, "I am a companion of all who fear you, and of those who keep [שמרו] your precepts" (Ps 119:63). The Hebrew word for "companion" is חֵבֵר, translated in the Septuagint by μέτοχος, "share," "partaker." While it can indicate nothing more than friendship, the root חֵבֵר can also convey the sense expressed by the Greek κοινωνία— and in the Septuagint is commonly translated by this root.<sup>23</sup> The same root is used in Hosea 4:17 for Ephraim's being "joined" to idols and in Isaiah 44:11 for the "company" of those who worship and make idols. It is also used in Ezekiel 37:16–19 of the future oneness of Judah and Israel, a unity that will be wrought by God as a gift. Thus in Psalm 119 the Psalmist is not merely avowing that he runs with the right crowd; he is declaring himself in communion with those who are resolved to keep (שמר) God's word purely.

Negatively, there is no communion with those who do not hold the word in its truth and purity. Psalm 1, which charts the course of Israel's whole liturgical hymnody,<sup>24</sup> underscores this with its familiar words:

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,  
or stand in the way of sinners,  
or sit in the seat of scoffers;  
But in the Torah of the Lord is his delight,  
and his Torah he murmurs day and night (Ps 1:1–2).

Walking, standing, sitting with those who are opposed to God's word in faith ("scoffers"), in life ("sinners"), in faith and life ("wicked") is antithetical to continuing in the revelation of

the LORD, and vice versa.<sup>25</sup> How bad are the wicked and the counsel they give? How sinful are the sinners? Do the scoffers mock everything God says, or only a part of it? We are not told. The Torah will not be fractioned. Nor may one be simultaneously in communion with the altar of the LORD and the congregation of evildoers [קִהְלֵי מַרְעִים] (Ps 26:4–5 [5–6]; cf. Ps 16:3–4; 1 Cor 10:20–21). Right use of word and “sacrament,” then, includes a certain separation from those even within the commonwealth of Israel whose doctrine and life run against the pure words of God (Ps 12:6).

Just as holiness is communicated through legitimate communion in holy things, unholiness too can be communicated through contact with the unclean and the profane. This is depicted by such Levitical laws as those concerning contact with unclean animals (Leviticus 11) or with persons having bodily discharges (Leviticus 15), where those who touch them are counted unclean. Such “holiness laws” graphically picture the rather more serious outcome of contact with those who have profaned themselves by willfully violating the Torah of the LORD’s mouth. This is shown by the account of Korah’s rebellion, previously cited. When Korah has usurped the role of priest and incited his company against the leaders, the Lord says to Moses and Aaron,

“Separate yourselves from the midst of this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.” And they fell on their faces, and said, “O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and will you be angry with the whole congregation?” And the LORD said to Moses, “Say to the congregation, Get away from around the dwelling of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram . . . And [Moses] said to the congregation, “Depart from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, lest you be swept away with all their sins” (Nm 16:21–26).

This scene is replayed in different ways throughout Israel’s history: one man sins, the whole congregation shares in his guilt. Besides imputed guilt by contamination or association, there is also imputed guilt via “communion.” In the days of the divided monarchy, there are divine censures and punishments for godly kings of Judah who ally themselves with the ungodly kings of Israel for war (2 Chr 18:1–19:3; 20:35–37; 25:6–10). This may seem puzzling until we recall that Israel is a theocracy; “church” and “state” are inseparable. Waging war involves word (Dt 20:1–4; 2 Sm 5:19; 1 Kgs 22:5–23) and “sacrament” (Nm 10:9; Josh 6:6–21), indeed, the very presence of God himself (Dt 23:9–14)! A joint venture in war is by definition a joint participation in holy—or unholy—things. Hence the Lord’s censure and punishment of Judahite kings who “commune” (hithpael of חָבַר, 2 Chr 20:35; rendered *κοινωνεῖν* in the Septuagint) with the idolatrous northern kingdom via joint military campaigns. This imputed guilt, so prevalent in various ways throughout the Old Testament, provides the background for otherwise unsupported statements in the New Testament, such as those in 1 Timothy 5:22 and 2 John 10–11, which assert that the godly can “commune” (*κοινωνεῖν*) in the sins of others.

The biblical data certainly convince us that there was apostasy in the northern kingdom of Israel. “Altar and pulpit fellowship” was broken early on when Jeroboam set up his own altars, and there was sound reason for Judah to have no communion with Israel. Yet the norm in Israel seems to have been not crass idolatry, but syncretism, a blending of divine and man-made religions, a Yahwism tailored to suit the sensibilities of Canaan. Jeroboam’s shrines with their golden bulls (1 Kgs 12:25–33) were probably not so much full-scale departures from the true faith as attempts to popularize the faith in its cultural milieu—early Church Growth tactics, as it were. Some archeological evidence indicates that, despite the prophets’ repeated indictments of idolatry, both kingdoms, north and south, were prevalently nominal worshipers of the LORD God throughout most of their histories.<sup>26</sup> Here must be kept in mind the biblical standard of the right faith. All shades of gray are daubed soot-black by the prophets. Those who willfully propagate and practice a mixed faith are out-and-out idolaters in God’s eyes.

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*The invitation to the Passover is not “open communion.” It is a call to repentance, a summons to break from the false faith and life of the past.*

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Is religious contact with the northern kingdom always forbidden? An anomaly—one that some in our day use to support the practice of open Communion—is the great Passover kept by Hezekiah. The king sends letters to the twelve tribes, including the remnant of the northern kingdom left in the land after the Assyrian captivity, inviting them to come to Jerusalem for the feast (2 Chr 30:1–3). What is the story? Verses 6–9 provide the clue.

So couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his princes, as the king had commanded, saying, “O people of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. Do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who were faithless to the LORD God of their fathers, so that he made them a desolation, as you see. Do not now be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD, and come to his sanctuary, which he has sanctified for ever, and serve the LORD your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you. For if you return to the LORD, your brethren and your children will find compassion with their captors, and return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him” (RSV).

The invitation to the Passover is not “open communion.” It is a call to repentance, a summons to break from the false faith and



life of the past. It is a call for Israel to return to the pure worship that existed before the kingdom was divided and before Jeroboam instituted a man-made worship at Dan and Bethel in place of the divinely instituted service at Jerusalem (1 Kgs 12:25–33). It is an earnest invitation to those whose altars now lie in ruins to return to the old faith of Abraham. The men of the northern kingdom get the message loud and clear:

So the couriers went from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun; but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. Only a few men of Asher, of Manasseh, and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem (2 Chr 30:10–11 RSV).

Whatever bad can be said of those proud ones who reject repentance, they do recognize that much more is at stake in attending the Passover than a free meal, or a pretense of unity for love's sake. For them to go to Jerusalem would be to confess by their presence their agreement with and allegiance to the faith professed at the temple and proclaimed in the edict of Hezekiah. This they are unwilling to do, and this much at least is to their credit.

Less credit can be given to their spiritual descendants some two centuries later. When the returnees from the Babylonian exile are engaged in rebuilding the temple, the people of the land, who learned of Israel's God from the remnant of the northern kingdom, want a piece of the action, on the grounds that they are of the same faith.

Now the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the sons of the captivity were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel. And they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of the families and said to them, "We will build with you; for, like you, we seek your God, and we have been sacrificing to him from the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here (Ezra 4:1–2).

These Samaritans are not merely offering a neighborly helping hand. In asking to help build the temple, they are asking to share in its divine service, in its "means of grace." How little things change! The world has never lacked those who demand ecumenical tolerance, openness, and latitude in the name of love. In this case, they receive a rebuff that in our age would be considered harshly unloving:

But Zerubbabel and Joshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel said to them, "You have no part with us in building<sup>27</sup> a house for our God, but we by ourselves [יְהוָה] will build for the LORD, the God of Israel, just as the king, Cyrus king of Persia, has commanded us" (Ezra 4:3).

In other words, communion with the temple is only for the orthodox worshipers of the LORD. No "levels of fellowship" here, despite the Samaritans' claim to a common faith! This

refusal is not determined, as is sometimes claimed, by their ethnic impurity—although in Ezra's time for reasons of casuistry ethnicity is an important factor<sup>28</sup>—but by impurity of the faith they confess and practice. This is borne out by Ezra 6:21, which states that the Passover was celebrated by the returned exiles "and all who had separated themselves from the uncleanness of the Gentiles of the land in order to seek the LORD, the God of Israel." These separated ones probably included not only biological descendants of Israel left in the land from the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, but also proselytes from among the Gentiles.<sup>29</sup> The key difference between them and those would-be communicants of the temple is this: they first removed themselves completely from the unholy worship devised by corrupt human imaginations.

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### *Communion with the temple is only for the orthodox worshipers of the LORD.*

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Two further points. First, the would-be co-builders of the temple turn out to be hostile enemies when refused fellowship. They hinder the temple's construction, and as a result its completion is delayed for some twenty years. One supposes that if the exiles had relented, things would have gone much more smoothly for them. Yet they did not consider that the end justified the means: there could be no compromise for the sake of outward peace. Second, it becomes clear that the "orthodox" do not have their own house completely in order. Not until much later, when Ezra himself appears on the scene, is the practice finally eradicated of marrying foreign wives and thus being contaminated with the unclean worship of the Gentiles (Ezra 9–10). It is all the more noteworthy, then, that when the returned exiles consider the Samaritans' plea for "altar and pulpit fellowship," no one is heard to say, "We have our own problems; who are we to judge them? Let them come!" Disorder in their own house does not justify opening it up to utter havoc wreaked by others.

### CONCLUSION

I have attempted to present a fair sketch of the Old Testament's teaching on communion in holy things. It is vital that we who claim to be faithful heirs of the apostolic tradition listen not only to the apostles, but also to the same word of Scripture that has informed the apostles' doctrine. For we are indeed heirs of the good things that were foreshadowed by the old covenant with its holy institutions. We share in the holy word of grace and life won for us by him who is holiness incarnate. We share in his institutions of Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and Holy Communion, delivered through his holy ministry. Far from abrogating the need for careful use of holy things, the new covenant urges us who are the New Israel, the true holy nation, to even greater care as we seek to walk in the divine holiness that has been freely bestowed on us:

But just as he who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all conduct. Therefore it is written: “Be holy, for I am holy.” And if you call upon the Father, who judges without partiality according to the work of each one, pass the time of your pilgrimage in fear, knowing that you were redeemed not with perishable things—such as gold or silver—from the futile conduct handed down from your fathers, but with precious blood as of a pure and spotless lamb, Christ (1 Pt 1:15–19).

The Old Testament teaching will help us in a number of ways. It will help us regain an appreciation for the means of grace through which our holy God brings us into union with himself and imputes and imparts his holiness to us. It will spark a zeal for the pure teaching of the word and right administration of the sacraments, through which alone we become sharers in his holi-

ness. It will bring us to a new reverence and fear toward these holy things: reverence in that they impart to us the very Christ who sanctified us with his most holy blood, fear in the knowledge that misuse or lack of care is even more serious than it was under the old covenant. It will result in a careful communion of altar and pulpit based on the pure word and sacraments, a practice that after all proves to be of divine, not human origin. It will lead pastors to a renewed zeal in exercising divinely given responsibilities of teaching about and administering and overseeing the Lord’s holy things, and the whole church to a new appreciation of the holy office of the ministry. Most of all, it will instill in us a new wonder at the magnitude of our redemption. How marvelous to have communion with the Holy One of Israel through his cross and empty tomb, him who is the fulfillment of the Old Testament’s manifold holy institutions, yes, him who is the sum of all holy things on earth and in heaven! **LOGIA**

## NOTES

1. *TDNT*, s.v. *κοινός* κτλ. The closest single term is the root *חבר*, which is sometimes translated by the *κοινωνία*—group in the Septuagint; but neither the Hebrew nor Greek roots is used in the Septuagint for communion with God.

2. For the theology and practice of the early church, see Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, trans. N. E. Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966).

3. Contra John G. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, *Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), xiii, who views holiness mainly as a cleanness that God requires from his people.

4. In Deuteronomy, Moses urges Israel to *hear* (שמע), *keep* (שמר), and *do* (עשה), in all but a few cases in that order. This suggests a progression from hearing the faith-giving word of deliverance, to holding fast that gospel-centered word with its accompanying commands, not adding to it or subtracting from it (Dt 4:12), to doing the commands as the fruit of the faith that comes by hearing.

5. Exodus 3 makes this clear. The LORD appears to Moses in the burning bush—a real bush—and says of the suffering Israelites, “I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians” (Ex 3:8). Then he says, “So now, go. I am sending you . . . to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt” (Ex 3:10). The Lord is truly, “sacramentally” present to save, yet he delivers the goods through Moses.

6. For the remembrance motif, and for the Old Testament evidence on how the Lord’s holy institutions can be said both to incorporate Israel anew into his deliverance and to bring it anew to them, see Alan Ludwig, “Remembrance and Re-presentation in Israelite Worship,” STM thesis (St. Louis, 1992).

7. *TDNT*, s.v. *ὁνομα*. There is no need to see an evolutionary development or a conflict between the theology of the tabernacling presence of the LORD himself and the assertion that only his Name dwells in the holy place while he himself resides in heaven; contra Bietenhard, the author of the *TDNT* article.

8. The word of God is the word of the Holy One of Israel (Is 5:24). His words are holy words (Jer 23:9). His statutes can be “profaned” (חלל, Ps. 89:31 [32])—a word reserved for the desecration of holy things.

9. Some scholars question whether Leviticus 17:11 is the *sedes doctrinae* for sacrifice; see the recent study by Philip Peter Jenson, *Graded Holiness: a Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 106 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 151–152. The exegesis of the verse is difficult, complicated by rejection of substitutionary atonement and by the uncertain meaning of *כפר*. For a defense of Leviticus 17:11 as substitutionary, see Angel Rodriguez, *Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 3 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1979).

10. Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament* [hereafter NICOT] (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1979), 55.

11. See Horace D. Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 81.

12. Jenson, 161, appealing to Jacob Milgrom, denies any atoning import to the peace offering. Wenham argues for the traditional etymological link with *שָׁלוֹם*—“health, prosperity, peace with God, i.e., salvation” (Leviticus, 77–78). See also Hummel, 81.

13. Exodus 24:5; 32:6; and often.

14. For sacrifice as communion see Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 1: 154–158.

15. Eichrodt, 1: 157, calls this a “sacramental relationship.”

16. Cf. *Did.* 9.5; Justin, *Apol.* 1.66.

17. For a thorough study of this matter, see Jenson, *Graded Holiness*. A useful summary of his conclusions is given in chart form by Paul Raabe, in *Concordia Journal* 20 (January 1994): 69–70.

18. Those who dismiss priestly connections to the apostolic ministry on the grounds that the New Testament priesthood consists of all believers should keep in mind that this was true in the Old Testament too (Ex 19:6). Furthermore, the Lutheran Confessions do not hesitate to make these connections (Ap XXII, 7; XXIII, 64–66; XXIV 34), although they recognize also the discontinuity between the two offices (Ap XXIV, 52–59; Tr 26). See Paul L. Schrieber, “Priests among Priests: The Office of the Ministry in Light of the Old Testament Priesthood,” *Concordia Journal* 14 (July 1988): 215–227; also Hummel, 627.

19. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 18–25; Jenson, 79–80, 158–159. Jenson distinguishes two kinds of *חֹטֵאת* offerings in Leviticus, one for impurity and one for sin. This is unwarranted, given the entire Old Testament context.

20. For aspects of continuity and discontinuity between Christ and the Law, see Gordon J. Wenham, “Christ’s Healing Ministry and His Attitude to the Law,” in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*, ed. H. H. Roweden (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982), 115–126.

21. Abraham and Joseph are outstanding examples. David was on cordial terms with non-Israelite rulers (1 Sm 27:1–3; 2 Sm 10:1–2; 1 Kgs 5:1). Daniel and his friends were officials in Nebuchadnezzar’s cabinet (Dn 2:46–49). Nehemiah was the Persian king Artaxerxes’ cupbearer (Neh 1:11). It is noteworthy that in Egypt the children of Israel lived and ate apart from the Egyptians because of the Egyptians’ scruples, not theirs (Gn 43:32, 46:34)!

22. There has been much debate whether the “prophet” is Joshua, the whole succession of prophets, or the Prophet, Jesus Christ. Deuteronomy itself answers the question. Deuteronomy 18:20 shows that it applies

to the LORD's succession of chosen prophets, for the possibility that a prophet can speak out of turn applies to each prophet—except *the* Prophet. Yet Dt 34:9 seems to indicate that Joshua is intended when it says, “so the people *listened to him* and did just as the LORD had commanded Moses.” The book of Joshua also stresses the continuity between Moses and Joshua (1:5–8, 17; 3:7; 4:14; 11:15). Deuteronomy 34:10, however, all but contradicts the promise in Deuteronomy 18:18 when it says, “And there *has not arisen* a prophet since in Israel *like Moses*, whom the LORD knew face to face.” Joshua and the prophets are at best partial, imperfect fulfillments of the promise. Jesus is finally the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15, 18. Acts 3:21–23 seems to reflect an understanding of Deuteronomy 18 that is Messianic, yet also comprehends the whole succession of prophets in their witness to the coming Messiah.

23. See note 1 above.

24. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59: A Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 113–114.

25. See Kraus, 115–116.

26. See Jeffrey H. Tigay, “Israelite Religion: The Onomastic and Epigraphic Evidence,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr. et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 157–194. For the syncretistic nature of Yahwism as it was practiced, see P. Kyle McCarter Jr., “Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy: Biblical and Epigraphic Data,” in the same volume, 137–155.

27. לֹא־לָכֶם וְלִי לְבָנוּת, literally, “not for you and for us to build.”

28. See F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 18.

29. Fensham, 96.

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# The Holy Things for the Holy Ones

JOEL A. BRONDOS



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

WHEN JOHN HANNAH CHARACTERIZES THE LORD AS ONE who is “reckless about his love and his passion to include the world,”<sup>1</sup> he seems to allude to the “reckless love” proclaimed in this third stanza of Martin Franzmann’s “Preach You the Word” (LW 259). If this is true, Hannah understands this recklessness not as a bit of poetic license on Franzmann’s part, but as a paradigm to be implemented in the administration of the Lord’s Supper.

Franzmann’s hymn portrays the sower of Matthew 13 who went out to sow his seed. This seed was not planted one by one. It was broadcast onto all different kinds of ground. Is *that* the point to be drawn from this extended figure of speech? Have we in this parable a model for the office of the holy ministry in handling the means of grace? Perhaps the inherent problems of turning parables into paradigms are already known—such as the danger that arises as the result of failing to recognize the *propria* of each of the means of grace: the Holy Gospel preached, Holy Absolution pronounced, Holy Baptism administered, and Holy Communion distributed. What may be true for one is not necessarily true for all. What might be reckless love for one could very well be feckless love for another.

Seed may be scattered. Pearls may not. I am unaware that any hymns have been written for Matthew 7:6 as they have for Matthew 13, but in contrast to the sower scattering his seed abroad with reckless love, we hear: “Do not give what is holy to dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces.” Distinguishing between the word preached and the Sacrament administered, Luther wrote:

Thus, Christ did; he delivered his sermons to the multitude for everybody, as the Apostles later did, so that every person heard them, believers and unbelievers; whoever caught it, caught it. We must do the same. But the Sacrament we are not to cast among the crowd. When I preach the gospel, I do not know upon whom it takes effect; but here I must be convinced that it has

taken effect upon those who come to the sacrament. Here I must not act in doubt, but be sure that the one to whom I give the Sacrament has laid hold of the gospel and has the truth.<sup>2</sup>

The word may be sown like seed, but the body and blood of our Lord may not. Why not? What is so holy about Holy Communion?

Prior to the distribution, every early Eastern Christian heard the call: “The holy things for the holy ones.” (“Things” is here not plural but *dual*, referring to the consecrated elements.)<sup>3</sup> These holy things are Christ’s body and blood. Who are the holy ones? Can there be any holy ones in a world where “nobody’s perfect”?

Holiness as a “concept” does not seem very workable. The world looks for something more practical than holiness, something that does not exclude everybody on the planet. Something like “pure doctrine” befits holiness, but *it* does not seem within the reach of sinners either. The possibility of really having one, *holy*, catholic, and apostolic Church on the basis of doctrine or life seems impossible. The alternative solution for many is to set the one, holy, catholic, apostolic body of Christ in some mystical, Platonic, invisible place “out there,” while down here on earth they attempt what they believe to be the next best thing: lower the standards and refer to that diminution as “grace.” Attempt to get as close to holiness as is humanly possible, but then call it mercy when God makes up the rest. Break holiness down into levels. Put holiness on a sliding scale and use that scale to measure levels of fellowship for the sake of ecumenism. In this manner of speaking, however, it must be clear that every scale has its limits and every level has its range.

One consequence of such an approach is that limits have to be determined and publicized: what lines are to be drawn and not to be crossed, how broad or narrow the lines, who draws the lines, on what basis the lines are drawn, how the lines are to be enforced. A council or commission or convention might be appointed or elected to do this—or each congregation may be permitted to do it in a sort of *cuius regio eius religio* (“whose the territory, his religion” or “to each his own”) kind of a way without any regard for concord in the whole of Christendom. Where holiness seems idealistic and impractical, such demarcations will seem realistic and practical. Where holiness dwells in reality, such prescriptions are most impractical and offensive.

Holiness mitigated and reduced is sometimes preached and taught as “gospel.” The “good news” is that mortals can discount holiness and still be accepted and loved. Attempts to quantify or

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qualify holiness, in effect, create a god who is a gospel reductionist. An angel with flaming sword ought to be placed at the lips of one who would suggest such a thing. A guard should be placed at the doors of the fool who would maintain that the *holy* Lord God sets limits and levels on his holiness and truth to a degree that they might be the more attainable by mere mortals. Only on earth could such a thing be imagined, for the Lord God has no heavenly jester to tell him, “Hey, God, if you really expect to have believers down there, you’re going to have to lighten up a little. You can’t be so . . . well, you know . . . so *holy*. You’ve got to give a little here and there so you don’t turn people off and turn them away.”

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***Attempts to quantify or qualify holiness, in effect, create a god who is a gospel reductionist.***

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When God gave his only Son, he was neither mitigating his holiness nor abrogating the law. Not one jot or tittle of the law passed without being fulfilled. This being granted, shall we say that such mercy in Christ grants us a waiver to act with the shrewdness of the unjust steward who encouraged the master’s debtors to adjust their accounts (Luke 16)? Does grace vitiate holiness? Do the means of grace present us with an opportunity to bypass holiness by approaching the Lord God on our own terms? If not, then we must acknowledge that communion with the holy Lord God in the body and blood of our Lord Jesus is not a matter of bare minimum standards and limits and lines and levels.

When rebellious creatures are confronted by the holiness of their Creator, the only appropriate response is an involuntary reaction: a hit-the-dirt-bite-the-dust-sackcloth-and-ashes repentance. In the face of holiness, sinners are beggars, and beggars cannot be choosers. In the face of holiness, there are no rights. In the face of holiness, there can be no “I’m doing the best that I can” or “we’re all trying to get to the same place.” In the face of holiness, there can be no pleading of ignorance. In the face of holiness, those who stumble at just one point are guilty of all.

Jesus hears the kind of repentance that is necessary in the face of holiness after he implies that a Syrophoenician woman is a dog (Mt 15:26–27): “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.” That was not an especially kind thing for Jesus to say. The woman could have been upset: “Whom are you calling a dog, Jesus?” But instead we hear a confession. “Yes, Lord, I am a dog. I do not come making demands. I will receive whatever crumbs you give.” This is her confession. This is repentance that the Christ identifies as great faith. This faith does not make demands. It does not insist on rights. Where the holy law has done its work, there are no rights, no demands. The law has to demolish every thought and pretension of rights and demands because rights, demands, excuses, rationalizing, and qualifications stand in the way of gifts. If I can demand it, it is not a gift. If I can lay claim to it by asserting that I am at least as deserving as

the next guy, it is not a gift. If I can qualify or quantify it, it is not a gift. It is not gospel.

Such repentance and faith, however, is not a frequent companion of what has been called “ambiguous denominationalism.” This phenomenon is marked by an ambivalence with regard to what is believed, taught, and confessed in various church bodies, an indifference that would nevertheless lay claim to commune with the holy. Ambiguous denominationalism, however, is the result of ambiguous repentance. It is not certain what to repent because it is not certain what to believe. It cannot deny itself. It will not suffer itself to be last or least. It resists being crushed by the law or taking up the cross. It resists giving heed to anything contrary to what it learns from its heartfelt experience, determining by its self-assessment what works for itself. Ambiguous repentance satisfies itself with an ambiguous gospel.

Our post-denominational age has been attributed to a post-modern worldview. It is an age wherein people want to live by sight, not by faith. We may identify and recognize the throngs of people who have not the slightest clue as to what their church teaches—and of those who know what their church teaches, many feel free not to believe it, comparable to the way that many American Roman Catholics disregard the dictum on papal infallibility. In his recent book *Postmodern Times*, Gene Edward Veith cites a recent poll which found that

66 percent of Americans believe that “there is no such thing as absolute truth.” Among young adults, the percentage is even higher: 72 percent of those between eighteen and twenty-five do not believe that absolutes exist. . . . Moreover, the poll goes on to show that 53 percent of those who call themselves *evangelical Christians* believe that there are no absolutes. This means that the *majority* of those who say that they believe in the authority of the Bible and know Christ as their Savior nevertheless agree that “there is no such thing as absolute truth.”<sup>4</sup>

Nietzsche’s belief that “there is no truth, only interpretations” served as a foreboding precursor to today’s deconstructionism, which holds that language does not *reveal* meaning, it *constructs* meaning. “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.”<sup>5</sup> “Many people find this loss of truth liberating. If we can 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.’”<sup>6</sup>

Ken Schurb has also demonstrated this in his article “Declining Denominational Loyalty.” He shows that this generation is not particularly interested in repentance or holiness:

Baby boomers Bill and Michele may come to you with certain expectations about restroom quality, but it is statistically likely that they will also want a church to cater to their “nonreligious” ideas about any number of things. Even if no one in the congregation dares say so out loud,

a church can in effect set for itself the challenge of providing so many frills to such people as to keep attracting them back. If your church impresses them sufficiently, they will hopefully overlook a few things which might cause them to wince, like proclamation in which God exerts a claim on people in judgment and grace.<sup>7</sup>

And David Wells in *No Place for Truth* writes,

Accountability dies when the self is thought to be accountable only to itself and in its place there has arisen an ethic that resolves everything into a simple proposition: what's right is what feels good.<sup>8</sup>

Whenever we admit—and in some of our parishes, even *invite*—people of disparate faiths (*fides quae*) to the Lord's table, we are bending the knee to this Baal. We are thereby conceding that *what* we believe, teach, and confess is not absolute—or if we believe them to be absolute, that they are unnecessary adiaphora for communion with the holy. Do we have to subjugate ourselves to this worldview in order for evangelism to be successful? Can we accede to postmodernism without profaning the very holy and precious body and blood of Christ Jesus?

Ambiguous denominationalism is founded on shifting, sinking sand. It cannot be the church that is established upon the solid Rock. It cannot provide any content to faith that can withstand the particular trials and temptations that seek to undermine faith. Thus it cannot be something overlooked or condoned when considering communion with the holy. Ambiguous denominationalism stumbles over the scandal of particularity inherent in the gospel—a gospel that is for all, but excludes those who choose to come in some way other than *the Way*. This is to say that salvation is open to everyone, but there is only one way in. Salvation is for all, but it excludes those who would come in some other way than Christ. The Sacrament of the Altar *is* the gospel. The Lord's Supper, by extension, is open to all, but there is only one way in. The Lord's Supper is for all, but it is exclusive only in saying that it is to be received this way and in no other. Thus it is exclusive not in a restrictive sense but in a directive sense, and exclusion from the Lord's Table may then be understood as an alien work (*opus alienum*), not the intended work (*opus proprium*).

Entrance is to be gained through the Door rather than over the wall. If it is the indicator of true *shepherds* that they come in through the gate (John 10:1–9), then is it not also to be the indicator of true *sheep*? If only thieves and robbers get into the sheepfold over the wall, then what kind of creatures are they who wish to get into the sheepfold without using the Door? This Door is the one who taught things that led many of his disciples to say, “This is a hard saying; who can accept it?” Jesus responded, “Does this offend you? No one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by my Father.” From that time many of his disciples turned back and walked with him no more (John 6:60, 61, 66). Ambiguous denominationalism stumbles over the hard sayings of Jesus—sayings that are hard not because they are too theologically deep, but hard because these words are holy. Holy does not admit levels, standards, and limits.

How many “hard” and holy words does the Lord Jesus Christ have for us? Holiness, however, does not engage in debating the number of doctrines one has to believe before one is admitted to the Lord's Table. One doctrine about “real presence”? Six chief parts? One thousand seven hundred forty-eight doctrines? You might try to count them. You might try to categorize and prioritize them—but a holy love expects nothing less than *all* of them. By comparison, one might ask: “How many falsehoods can you tell a father about his son before he gets angry enough to do something about it? What are the limits?” It should be apparent that the moment one starts asking about limits, something has already been broken. The father could respond: “You may not tell any falsehoods about my son. Do you have to know every detail about my son? No, but if you love my son, you will delight in all of the truth and will not let any falsehood go unanswered.” Doctrine is a whole. No piece may be willfully rejected without harm to the whole.

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Admittedly, there are scores who contest this position, citing article VII of the Augsburg Confession. Tappert translates the Latin, “For the true unity of the church *it is enough* to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.” He translates the German, “For *it is sufficient* for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.” In the August 1994 issue of *Lutheran Forum*, Paul Wildgrube writes: “Enough is enough. Sufficient is sufficient. If there is agreement on the gospel of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel, then we should be willing to celebrate that unity at the altar.”<sup>9</sup> Note that here he says something more of the word *gospel* than is in the text: he apposites “of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.” He assumes the meaning of gospel here in its narrow sense instead of considering whether it may mean the gospel in the broad sense, the gospel as the revelation of the Lord in his Word, law and gospel, his teaching and all its components. This narrowing begs the question.

The Formula of Concord ought not be set against the Augsburg Confession. The *satis est* of AC VII, 2 says nothing contrary to or different from SD X, 31, which says:

In line with the above, churches will not condemn each other because of a difference in ceremonies, when in Christian liberty one uses fewer or more of them, as long as they are otherwise agreed in doctrine and in all its articles [*si modo in doctrina et in omnibus illius part-*

*ibus*] and are also agreed concerning the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the well-known axiom, “Disagreement in fasting should not destroy agreement in faith.”

The *satis est* is saying nothing more and nothing less than everything that the Lord has taught, doctrine and all its articles. We are not to demand obedience to any additional human rites or ceremonies, and we are not to settle for anything less.

It seems as though people who talk in terms of “how much is enough” regard doctrines with about as much enthusiasm as a four-year-old speaks about green peas. “How many of these do I *have* to eat before I can have my ice cream?” instead of “More peas, please!” When we speak of doctrine, we are not talking about doctrinal *systems* of Pieper or Chemnitz or Barth or Braaten and Jenson. We are speaking in the sense of 1 Timothy 4:16, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine [not *your* doctrine]. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” This kind of doctrine does not lie in the realm of sanctification or adiaphora; it stands in the realm of justification and salvation, words of Spirit and life—all of which work together for us *propter Christum*. According to Titus 1:9, a pastor is to hold fast “the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

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***The satis est is saying nothing more and nothing less than everything that the Lord has taught, doctrine and all its articles.***

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This we maintain at a time when people will not endure sound doctrine, heaping up teachers for themselves according to their own desires, according to what their own itching ears want to hear. Can such an attitude commune with the holy without condemnation? Can those unworthy guests of the Lord’s Supper, who are without true repentance and sorrow because they do not know what to repent nor which truths to confess, receive Christ’s body without loading themselves with guilt and shame? In his *Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament*, Luther writes:

Consequently, it will not do the fanatics any good if, in connection with the sacrament, they do a great deal of babbling about the spiritual eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ and about the love and unity of Christians. For these words are nothing but fig leaves with which Adam and Eve wanted to cover and adorn themselves so that God should not notice their shame and sin. Much less will their great labor of teaching and writing and their earnest, chaste conduct help them. All this is still a heathenish practice.

It is also useless for them to believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and in Christ the Savior. Everything, I say, is lost along with all articles of faith, no matter how correctly and blamelessly they speak of and represent the same with their false, blaspheming mouth, because they deny and call false this single article of faith when Christ says in the sacrament: “Take (the bread) and eat; this is my body which is given for you,” etc. For what they chatter about spiritual eating and about love has solely this aim: They want to cover up and hide such harm and poison so that one should not take notice of or see the same but should regard them as remarkable and very good Christians. This is what we call placing an illusion before one’s eyes and adorning the gloomy devil (as St. Paul teaches [2 Cor. 11:14]) with the bright dress of the angels of light. Therefore, their great boasting and many works are in vain because they do not want to be Christians in this one article of faith . . .

Perhaps you would like to say: “My dear Luther, it is to be hoped that this is not so, or at least there is no use being anxious about the fact that God should be so very vehement and relentlessly strict that he would want to condemn people on account of one article of faith if they faithfully adhere to and believe all other articles.” This is the way not only the heretic comforts himself, but also other sinners comfort themselves. Sirach [7:9] writes that they want God to take into consideration the rest of their good works and to be gracious to them, as King Saul, too, wanted to cover up his disobedience with his religious devotion and sacrifice, 1 Samuel 15[:15]. So they proceed securely and with self-assurance, as if they lacked nothing; the many great works and the labor which they do will outweigh a single failure.

Over against this [attitude] it must be said that God could scarcely hope or expect that his poor, miserable, blind creation should be so senseless and proud in opposition to its Creator and Lord that it would deny, regard as false, and blaspheme his divine Word; rather, he should be able to hope that his humble, submissive, obedient creation would not deny and blaspheme a single word but sincerely receive all words [in general] and every word in particular, and give thanks with great joy that the creation is worthy to hear one single word from its dear God. Yes, it is fitting for God to look at it in this way.

Now, however, the heretics treat God’s word as though it were man’s word, or a fool’s word, which they can despise, mock, and blaspheme. They think they can do everything better according to their own good judgment. Nor do they want to let themselves be corrected. So there is no help for them. In this situation their many great and good deeds and labors will not outweigh the one bad point.

There are neither many nor few, neither small nor great, good works before God, but only vain, evil, condemned works, for unbelief or blasphemy destroys and condemns even the good (as *they* call them) works; yes,

such good works are worse than plain sins are, because they are performed and take place in the midst of blasphemy and stubborn denial of God's name and word (AE 38: 311–313).

Still, a view prevails these days that a Lord's Supper linked in any way to right doctrine gets in the way. Sometimes it got in the way of a political agenda. Earlier in this century it got in the way of a utopian ecumenical agenda. Now such a Communion practice seems to be getting in the way of evangelism and church growth. For example, several proponents and key speakers of the AAL-sponsored Church Membership Initiative (like Alan Klaas) are unabashed critics of the idea that communion practices should be determined on the basis of our confessional corpus. They claim that such a practice inhibits church growth—that it actually impedes evangelism and missions.

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*A view prevails these days that a Lord's Supper linked in any way to right doctrine gets in the way.*

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The idea that doctrines are somehow secondary or inconsequential—or even an impediment—to those who would receive the Lord's Supper may be the result of considering the Sacrament of the Altar in Augustinian valid-and-effective terms. There are those who think that a valid Lord's Supper effects its gospel work in everyone, but Luther and others have already made the clear confession that the Lord does not bestow gospel gifts in an *opus operatum* way—his gifts are not coerced out of him for every person who partakes. The benefits of the Lord's Supper are not bestowed in a cause-and-effect, automatic, or mechanical way.

At the same time, it is not a matter of one's personal faith working as an *opus operantis* that causes certain effects for the recipient. The idea that faith is the ingredient that makes a valid sacrament effective is rejected in the Formula of Concord:

Meanwhile, however, we must call attention also to this, that the Sacramentarians artfully and wickedly pervert this useful and necessary rule, in order to deny the true, essential presence and oral partaking of the body of Christ, which occurs here upon earth alike by the worthy and unworthy, and interpret it as referring to the . . . spiritual and inner use of faith, as though it were no sacrament to the unworthy, and the partaking of the body occurred only spiritually, through faith, or as though faith made the body of Christ present in the Holy Supper, and therefore unworthy, unbelieving hypocrites did not receive the body of Christ as being present. *Now, it is not our faith that makes the sacrament, but only the true word and institution of our almighty God and Savior Jesus Christ* (SD VII, 88–89. Emphasis added).

The Lord's Supper has no power, that is, no irresistible, sure-fire, salvific benefit as if anyone could take it and it would work its work. Understandably, those who imagine otherwise are all too eager to admit anyone to the Lord's Supper (and I think this is the reason why we are even discussing this—we are not merely talking about Lutherans, recognizing there are faithful people in the ELCA from earlier days who need to be served with responsible pastoral care). The rationale is that if people have some kind of faith in Jesus Christ, if they are believers in Christ, then they are part of the body of Christ. Therefore, how can anyone deny Christ's body and blood to people who *are* the body of Christ? This line of reasoning begets a fideism that puts the weight on a person's ability to have faith apart from Christ who comes through the word purely preached and the sacraments rightly administered.

"It is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Cor 4:2). Stewards of the means of grace will be called to give an account. They must not squander or misappropriate what properly belongs to the master (Lk 16:1–13). "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (v. 10). Least and much come together when all of it is holy, when big and little alike are treated as holy. In this sense, there are no big and little doctrines. There is the *articulus stantis aut cadentis*, but it cannot and does not stand in isolation. John Stephenson writes:

Reductionism may be defined as the casting aside of accessories in order the more firmly to retain hold of the fundamentals. To some the Lutheran definition of the article of justification as the *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae* may seem redolent of reductionism, but for this suspicion to prove well-founded, justification must cease to be a fruit of Christology and turn into a facet of anthropology. Justification, in Luther and the confessions, presupposes the Trinity, our Lord's one person in two natures and his theanthropic work of reconciliation, and the work of the Holy Ghost in the means of grace. In other words, justification does not displace the other articles of faith but rather sets them in proper focus. The confessional understanding of the Holy Supper, likewise, does not stand in isolation from the other articles of faith; instead it concretely pinpoints their evangelical significance. . . .

Those who would consider confession of the real presence as the sole prerequisite to admitting baptized Christians of whatever persuasion to Lutheran altars can claim no support from the Reformer himself. Luther understood sin whole, grace whole, and doctrine whole. Doctrine, for him, was like a ring, which, when broken in just one place, ceases to be a ring (AE 38: 307). There are no degrees of orthodoxy or heterodoxy; doctrinal purity is an all or nothing matter: "For it is certain that whoever does not rightly believe in one article of faith, or does not want to believe (after he has been admonished and instructed), he surely believes no article with an earnest and true faith . . . for this reason we say that everything is to be believed completely and without



exception, or nothing is to be believed. The Holy Spirit does not let himself be divided or cut up so that he should let one point be taught and believed as trustworthy and another as false . . . for it is characteristic of all heretics that they start by denying one article of faith; after that, all the articles must suffer the same fate and they must all be denied, just as the ring, when it gets a crack or a chink is totally worthless. And if a bell cracks at one place, it does not chime anymore and is completely useless” (AE 37: 308).<sup>10</sup>

We might best understand “doctrinal purity” in terms of the proper distinction between law and gospel, for no practical purpose exists for discussing “doctrinal purity” apart from these. The doctrines of our Lord do not exist for their own sake but are rather given to us—either to expose the deeds of darkness or to proclaim his promises, bestow life to those slain by the law. Is anyone of the mind that law and gospel can be properly distinguished when both law and gospel are scattered about indiscriminately? Are there not great dangers when *either* the law *or* the gospel is misapplied? The congregations of Galatia and Corinth were wrong, the former for misusing the law and the latter for misappropriating the gospel. Thus the pastor must be able not only to distinguish but to apply law and gospel rightly. He must be able to ascertain which is needed. He has only the doctrines of our Lord with which to do this—he may not do it on the basis of cordial friendliness, arbitrary confession, human ordinances, common sense, or inner feeling.

This task does not make him a policeman, but a law-gospel man, a binding and loosing man, an office-of-the-keys man. When the binding key is utilized with respect to the unrepentant, it looks to all the world (and especially to the unrepentant soul) as though the pastor is an enforcer, judge, executioner, henchman, or tyrant. And that he is, but only penultimately. Such work is an *alien* but necessary work that exists solely to facilitate repentance in order that the wicked might turn from his way and live. What is it that exposes the kind of wickedness that runs deeper than mere immorality? From which ways is a person to be turned? The pastor will do his discerning on the basis of the doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ: Which doctrines are received? Which are refused? In this sense, the proper distinction and application of law and gospel with regard to admission to Christ’s true body and blood ought *never* be “reckless,” that is, indiscriminate.

### CONCLUSION

I have intentionally avoided the debate about “open” and “close” and “closed.” Dispute about the terms does not further the issue. I have avoided the use of anecdotes. I do not believe casuistry provides reliable standards with which to establish policy or practice. Instead, I have commended the repentance that does not attempt to quantify or qualify holiness. Such repentance occurs where the law has killed. Hearts that want to establish a fellowship on the basis of arbitrary human precepts are hearts that have not been killed by the law. These are hearts that can have no blessed communion with the holy. The only thing left for those who choose to use their freedom to water down the Word is to be constrained by the laws under which they have placed themselves with their ordination and installation vows.

First, the word is preached, broadcast like seed. When that word is resisted or reconstructed, there is no repentance. Where there is no repentance, there can be no blessed communion with the Holy One of God, Jesus Christ, his true body and blood. Where there is no blessed communion, only condemnation remains. To put it another way, the law accuses hearers of being dogs. Where that judgment is denied, no gospel can be received, but where the word is received repentantly in the manner of dogs awaiting crumbs from the table, there the Lord brings his gracious will to pass and he gives not mere crumbs but himself, his holy body and blood.

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### *When that word is resisted or reconstructed, there is no repentance.*

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I have not adduced the many weighty testimonies of the church fathers, such as those found in Ignatius of Antioch, where we hear *ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia* confessed, but I hope to have shown a Communion practice that has its identity in Christ rather than a practice that is determined by felt needs. Felt needs can deceive. Lost sheep are led astray by false feelings. In contrast to felt needs “in here,” holiness is not something “out there”; it is incarnate for us in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. We receive the holy body and blood of our Lord where the Law has worked a true repentance, that is, where the natural man has not attempted to qualify, quantify, or in some other way ameliorate the word of God. At the same time, we must be able to distinguish between breaking the eighth commandment and the rightful anathematizing of unholy teachings. The holy Word does not need to be defended by underhanded means. The condemnations and curses of the Word are sufficient. When wolves come in sheep’s clothing, it is not a time for patience and peace. Where true repentance and the holy gospel are threatened, stern measures are called for, times to condemn and curse, as Luther writes:

Therefore let us learn to praise and magnify the majesty and authority of the Word. For it is no trifle, as the fanatics of our day suppose; but one dot (Matt. 5:18) is greater than heaven and earth. Therefore we have no reason here to exercise love or Christian concord, but we simply employ the tribunal; that is, we condemn and curse all those who insult or injure the majesty of the divine Word in the slightest, because (5:9) ‘a little yeast leavens the whole lump.’ But if they let us have the Word sound and unimpaired, we are prepared not only to exercise charity and concord toward them, but to offer ourselves as their slaves and to do anything for them. (*Lectures on Galatians*, 1535, AE 27: 46).

We want to settle differences in a peaceable way and we want to extend the kingdom of faith, but we will not attempt to do so—for in truth it cannot be done—by a wholesale distribution of the holy to the unrepentant. When, for the sake of expediency,

we cast pearls before swine, thinking that they will love us and join us, not only will they eventually trample the gospel underfoot, but they will also turn out to be the worst parish antagonists, ravenous wolves who would tear us to pieces. Thus the final word of our confession remains the same today as the initial conclusion of the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, when commending the holy things for the holy ones:

From our exposition friends and foes may clearly understand that we have no intention (since we have no authority to do so) to yield anything of the eternal and unchangeable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquillity, and outward harmony. Nor would such peace and harmony last, because it would be con-

trary to the truth and actually intended for its suppression. Still less by far are we minded to whitewash or cover up any falsification of true doctrine or any publicly condemned errors. We have a sincere delight in and deep love for true harmony and are cordially inclined and determined on our part to do everything in our power to further the same. We desire such harmony as will not violate God's honor, that will not detract anything from the divine truth of the holy Gospel, that will not give place to the smallest error but will lead the poor sinner to true and sincere repentance, raise him up through faith, strengthen him in his new obedience, and thus justify and save him for ever through the sole merit of Christ (SD XI, 95–96). **LOGIA**

## NOTES

1. *Lutheran Forum* 28 (August, 1994): 46.
2. Quoted in Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 3: 381–382.
3. Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, trans. N. E. Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 9.
4. Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 16.
5. Veith, 57.
6. Veith, 59.
7. Ken Schurb, “Declining Denominational Loyalty,” *LOGIA* 2 (Reformation 1993): 45–47.
8. David Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 148.
9. Paul Wildgrube, *Lutheran Forum* 28 (August 1994): 44.
10. John R. Stephenson, “Admission to the Lutheran Altar: Reflections on Open Versus Close Communion,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 53 (January–April 1989): 46–47.

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# Lutheran Confessional Optimism after World War II

Hanns Lilje and Theodore Graebner

EDWARD A. ENGELBRECHT



IN A BRIEF LETTER DATED JUNE 14, 1947, PRESIDENT JOHN W. Behnken of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod [LCMS] addressed his coworker Dr. F. E. Mayer:

I do believe that everything possible should be done to strengthen the cause of those who are really interested in Lutheranism, Confessional Lutheranism. I do think you should spend some time with Dr. Meisser, Dr. Sasse, the men at Friedberg and any others who are interested in Confessional Lutheranism. It is becoming more and more evident to me that our Synod's obligation lies in that area and that we must do everything possible to support and strengthen the men who are interested in sound Lutheranism. May God be with you and guard and protect you on your important journey!<sup>1</sup>

This correspondence and others like it represent the LCMS's interest in and enthusiasm for the German Lutheran churches after World War II. Over the next year this interest spread beyond the Free Churches to the *Landeskirchen* (German territorial churches) and even to the *Unierte Kirchen* (united Lutheran and Reformed churches) as a result of renewed confessional optimism.

To understand how this took place some background on the churches in Germany as well as the Missouri Synod will be necessary. But this paper will focus particularly on two men: *Landesbischof* of Hannover, Dr. Hanns Lilje, and Dr. Theodore Conrad Graebner, professor of dogmatic theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, long-time editor of the *Lutheran Witness*. These men were key players in the theological dialogues and bore significant influence within their churches. They could be described as the prime representatives of the "confessional optimism" that marked this period.

## THE EUROPEAN SETTING

The struggle for unity in the German churches dates back to the time of the Reformation itself. This was due to Luther's adoption of *Notbischöfe* and the later Religious Peace of Augsburg (1555) with its policy of *cuius regio, eius religio*, the principle that the ruler determined the religion of his subjects. The most notable flaw of this means of church structure was the Prussian Union (1817) under Frederick William III, who tried to force Reformed and Lutheran churches together in his region. This brought a

confessional awakening among the Lutherans, causing some to flee the country, others to form Lutheran Free Churches, and the General Evangelical Lutheran Conference among the *Landeskirchen* (1867).<sup>2</sup>

From the time of the Prussian Union to the early twentieth century, confessional orthodoxy waned. In its place arose theological "liberalism," the offspring of Rationalism and Pietism. Emphasis on doctrinal differences diminished and the churches adopted a more social agenda.

After World War I the princes of the German empire gave up their role as heads of churches and the bishops assumed this responsibility (1919–22). To help manage church affairs in this first-ever separation of church and state, the Federation of German Evangelical Churches was formed (1922). It included twenty-eight territorial churches in a loose federation that did not enforce doctrinal uniformity. The Lutherans maintained a unified distinctness through the General Evangelical Lutheran Conference (AELK).

Into the tottering Weimar Republic stepped Adolf Hitler (1933), who shortly made himself Führer. His vision of a strong Germany naturally included a unified church. To this end the "German Evangelical Church" or "German Christians" was created, a state-dominated religion without clear theological direction. This prompted a response from concerned Protestants who formed the "Confessing Church," a direct response to government control of the churches. After the establishment of this resistance through the Barmen Declaration (1934), this group was persecuted, and many young pastors were conscripted into the military and perished in the war.<sup>3</sup>

When the war ended in 1945 the area of Germany was divided into American, British, French, and Russian zones. The German people had only recently tasted unity. The long struggle had taken them through political upheaval, two world wars, and the loss of many sons and daughters. The *Vaterland*, however, still had two clutching hands: a common language and the recently united churches. These clung tightly to the ruins of the nation.

## THE AMERICAN SETTING

In America efforts were being made toward union within the Synodical Conference in the 1930s but were disrupted by the LCMS's overtures to the new American Lutheran Church (ALC–1930). The Missouri Synod's Committee on Lutheran Church Union (1935) carried on doctrinal dialogues with this synod for several years, but attempts at clear consensus failed. In 1940 the LCMS rejected the Pittsburgh Agreement, which had been adopted by the ALC and the United Lutheran Church in

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America (ULCA). Other Lutherans had been coordinating their efforts in the National Lutheran Council since 1918, but the Missouri Synod's cooperation with this group was limited. As other synods merged and talked of merger, the LCMS found its efforts frustrating. In the surrounding American Protestantism many other churches were also working for unity, but the Missouri Synod saw much of this as involving "unionistic," dishonest compromise.<sup>4</sup>

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***While the Lutheran Churches of Germany had been battling for their lives, the LCMS had been struggling for unity with other confessional synods.***

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In 1945, however, a group of forty-four Missouri Synod clergymen, many of impressive status, gathered in Chicago and produced a controversial document. In twelve theses they outlined their position, describing their sincerity and deploring the lack of love within the synod in dealing with other Lutherans. While the "Statement of the Forty-Four" did not bring immediate results, it expressed the concerns of a number in the synod with the "old ways" of doing business.<sup>5</sup>

While the Lutheran Churches of Germany had been battling for their lives, the LCMS had been struggling for unity with other confessional synods. Out of these years of frustration and desperation would arise a vigorous confessional optimism. In this atmosphere of the post-war period both sides of the Atlantic would find new opportunities and reach new understandings of one another.

### THE CONFESSIONAL AWAKENING

Theologically the German Lutherans had been in trouble for some time. In the early 1800s the Prussian Union and higher criticism had robbed the churches of their Bible and much that was basic to the faith. A confessional response had come from Claus Harms and like-minded pastors, but the vast majority of Lutherans were not greatly disturbed by the slow erosion of the faith. Those who were disturbed formed Free Churches, islands of confessionalism in a sea of indifference.

Just after World War I, Karl Barth and others like him placed a renewed emphasis on principles of the Reformation. The confessionalism of the Barmen Declaration was a result of this new emphasis. Both Reformed and Lutheran pastors began to look to their confessional traditions for support against the attacks of Modernism and National Socialism. Being forced to work together during the war produced both a greater sense of interdependence and confessional self-awareness.

### CONFESSIONAL OPTIMISM: ESTABLISHING CONTACTS

Following the war, the Missouri Synod responded immediately with relief work. The newly-formed National Advisory Emergency Planning Council had five objectives:

- (1) A greater mission expansion program.
- (2) A personal evangelism move among our church members.
- (3) Re-integrating the returning soldier into congregational life.
- (4) Mission expansion, particularly in China, India, and Latin America.
- (5) A long-range program of physical and spiritual reconstruction in Europe, particularly in the land which gave birth to the Reformation.<sup>6</sup>

The support was vigorous and well received, beginning first with the Free Churches and then extending out to the *Landeskirchen*. Representatives of the LCMS to the German churches included President John Behnken and Dr. Lawrence Meyer.

The attitude of the Missouri Synod toward the theological situation in Germany immediately after the war is demonstrated by statements of [W.] A[rndt]<sup>7</sup> in the *Concordia Theological Monthly* "Theological Observer." "It is difficult to get a clear picture of what is happening along the church front in Germany." They were aware of the union efforts of the *Landeskirchen*, but saw this in terms of the Prussian Union. The "old liberalism" still seemed most influential:

What the churches are debating nowadays seems to be the question whether in the future the churches are to occupy themselves more with political and social matters than they did in the past. . . . To us it appears that what Germany needs is a return to the Augsburg Confession and the Lutheran symbols in general. True repentance is required. If that takes place, the improvements in the social and political sphere that are so ardently sought will be forthcoming.<sup>8</sup>

Opinions of church conditions remained essentially the same as before the war. The Americans were not yet aware of the changes that came out of the *Kirchenkampf*.

Within a year the gap of knowledge was bridged by personal contacts and news reports. Responding to a report from Geneva about confessional interests and the "aspiration of conservative Lutherans of Bavaria and Hannover for a united Lutheran Church," Dr. Arndt remarked:

Here a glimpse into the soul-searching theological debates now going on in Germany is furnished the reader. Will the banner of conservative Lutheranism, avoiding both unionism and separation, receive the support to which it is entitled?<sup>9</sup>

To answer this, Arndt directs the reader to a review of Stewart W. Herman's *The Rebirth of the German Church* by F. E. Mayer, who had been in Germany.<sup>10</sup> This book discusses the future of the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* (EKiD), the foundation for which had been laid at a meeting in Treysa in August of 1945.<sup>11</sup> Mayer notes that the author is too critical of the Bavarians, one of the more confessionally Lutheran *Landeskirchen*.

One of the main problems was already in view: Is EKiD a church (*Kirche*) or a federation (*Bund*)? Mayer quotes Pastor Martin Niemöller, who had become well known for his suffering under National Socialism. He was also an important figure in the



churches' "Declaration of Guilt" following the war.<sup>12</sup> Niemöller expressed fears that the *Landeskirchen* would not remain united and that EKID was "the hope of Confessing Christianity in Germany." To Mayer this was an unprofitable ignoring of fundamental differences. "It is a time when the theologians must wrestle with the problems and come to a God-pleasing solution." For the LCMS this did not mean a German union church.<sup>13</sup>

### *In Graebner's view the goal of unity was not to be achieved by means of compromise.*

On January 9, 1947, Pastor Niemöller visited Concordia Seminary and addressed the faculty and area pastors as well as the students. He was warmly received and deeply admired for his resistance of National Socialism. But some of his comments did not meet with approval, as Karl Kretzmann stated in the *Lutheran Witness*: "Though not all his hearers could agree with all the conclusions he drew from his convictions, all were impressed with his evident sincerity."<sup>14</sup> A letter of W. Arndt to Ruth Shipley of the United States Government Passport Office reveals the plans of the Emergency Planning Council to encourage more conservative Lutheran theology.

My objective in entering Germany would be to assist in the religious rehabilitation of that poor country through conferences with prominent religious leaders, some of whom, like Bishop Meiser of Bavaria, I know personally . . . it would be a pity if I did not use this opportunity to enter that country and bring such assistance as I am capable of to the Lutheran religious leaders of the nation.<sup>15</sup>

Like these early efforts, much of the LCMS's effort would focus on Bishop Meiser, who was seen as standing in direct opposition to the position of Niemöller.

In February of the same year it was announced that Prof. Martin Graebner, President of Concordia College in St. Paul, would be the synod's advisor to the Lutheran churches in Europe and the director of European Relief.<sup>16</sup> His brother, Theodore Graebner, was the editor of the *Lutheran Witness* and provided continual comment on the progress of work in Germany.

#### CONFESSIONAL OPTIMISTS: CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE

Theodore Graebner, born November 23, 1876, was the son of Dr. A. L. Graebner, professor at the Wisconsin Synod's Northwestern College. T. Graebner attended Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. After serving the church in a variety of ways he was called to teach at Concordia Seminary in 1913. Part of his responsibility was as editor of *Der Lutheraner* and a department of *Lehre und Wehre* (forerunner of *Concordia Theological Monthly [CTM]*) and also the *Magazin für ev. luth. Homiletik*. In 1914 he was made editor of the *Lutheran Witness*, and his work on the other publications was

gradually discontinued. He retired from the *Lutheran Witness* in October of 1949. T. Graebner was a vigorous apologist for confessional Lutheranism. He wrote extensively on the threat of lodges and cults as well as the desirability of Lutheran unity. In Graebner's view, however, the goal of unity was not to be achieved by means of compromise.<sup>17</sup>

Interacting with a report from Prof. Herman A. Preus of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, in the *Lutheran Outlook*,<sup>18</sup> T. Graebner says that preserving and revitalizing the heritage of the Reformation

is the purpose which the Missouri Synod has had in view when extending aid to Lutherans in Germany by distributing as a gift to German pastors and theologians thousands of copies of standard doctrinal works of the Lutheran Church and by sending theologians from this side of Europe to collaborate in the task of rebuilding strong confessional Lutheranism not only in Germany, but also in France, Poland, Finland, and the Baltic Provinces.<sup>19</sup>

In a letter to Martin Graebner, the growing sense of mission to promote the Lutheran Confessions that had been expressed by leaders of the synod gained a new focus. T. Graebner says, "Naturally, I am most interested in your contacts with such leaders as Bishop Lilje."<sup>20</sup>

In October of 1947 President Behnken traveled to Germany to meet some of the leaders there. In a letter to his family on October 11, 1947, he writes,

What the church situation is we shall learn within the next few weeks. Dr. M. Graebner spoke of it briefly this evening. He feels that since Lutheran bishops have consented to open Lutheran altars to the Reformed and the "Unierte" the situation is very pessimistic. God grant that this is not true, otherwise Lutheranism has capitulated and sacrificed the very thing for which Luther fought 400 years ago. Some of the forthcoming discussions will be difficult.<sup>21</sup>

President Behnken's pessimism quickly changed after a meeting with Bishop Lilje on October 25:

This evening we visited Bishop Lilje. We became acquainted with him and his good wife. Again we heard expressions of gratitude for help required. Especially Mrs. Lilje thanked so profusely. We found the bishop to be a man who wants to keep things within Lutheran channels. He seems to realize that it will come to a real battle. He personally, we believe, wants the right thing. His *Landeskirche* voted in favor of the VELKD, of course, within EKID. He is arranging for seminars for all pastors under his jurisdiction to study doctrine on the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. He stated that Bishop Meiser is doing the same thing. Perhaps, if some of these bishops will muster courage to confess, the cause of the Lutheran Church will not be lost altogether in Germany. May God grant them the courage to speak and to act!<sup>22</sup>

Lilje seems to have deeply impressed Behnken and turned his somber brooding of two weeks earlier into glimmering hope.

Hanns Lilje was born August 20, 1899. He grew up in Hannover, the city in which he would later become bishop.<sup>23</sup> As a young man he was the general secretary of the Student Christian Movement and participated in the study groups of the Faith and Order conference following Lausanne.<sup>24</sup> In 1936 he was elected General Secretary of the Lutheran World Convention and visited the United States in 1936 and 1938. His ability was well recognized both in America and his homeland.<sup>25</sup> During the war he suffered persecution because of his resistance. He was arrested in August of 1944 and remained in prison until May of 1945. At this time he was recalled to service by his bishop in Hannover. He was elected Bishop of Hannover in 1947 prior to the meeting with Behnken.<sup>26</sup>

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***If secularization, National Socialism, and indifference could not overcome the church's confession, what need was there to fear unionism?***

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At the same time that Behnken was uplifted by his visit with Lilje, news of the second conference at Treysa was reaching the United States. The October edition of *CTM* reproduced the analysis of Prof. E. Theodore Bachmann, the representative to the World Council of Churches in Germany. It notes that Lilje was absent during the conference on account of an illness. Also Bishop Meiser had not asserted himself. Rather,

Drs. Brunotte of Hannover, Kuenneth of Erlangen, and Kinder of Neuendettelsau, Bavaria, were the chief spokesmen for closer co-operation between the more conservative Lutheranism which they represented and the sound Biblical realism which has permeated the rest of EKID.<sup>27</sup>

Dr. Arndt expressed regret over the communion policy that was adopted, saying that it could not be justified.<sup>28</sup> "It is our hope that in the discussions that are now going on, the policy outlined in Point 4 will be repudiated."<sup>29</sup> Despite this point of contention, Arndt was encouraged by reports from F. E. Mayer that the Bavarians were equally upset by the decision. He concludes the observations with "perhaps genuine Lutheran consciousness will definitely assert itself."

#### DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATIONS

This, however, was not the opinion of many in the German Free Churches. The November issue of *CTM* carried an extended "Memorandum" concerning the formation of EKID. It was written by Dr. Martin Kiunke. Dr. Kiunke could only see compromise and unionistic disaster in the Treysa meetings. He concludes the article by saying:

We ask: Do the members of the German Lutheran provincial churches see the great dangers? We believe that the number of those who see it is not small. On the other hand, we believe that the majority is of the opinion that the Lutheran churches of Germany will be able to meet the danger effectively and conquer it.<sup>30</sup>

In this analysis we hear a differing voice of confessional optimism being expressed within the Lutheran *Landeskirche*. For them, the Lutheran Church and its confessions had nothing to fear. If secularization, National Socialism, and indifference could not overcome the church's confession, what need was there to fear unionism? In the second portion of his analysis, Dr. Kiunke focuses on the VELKD and states:

The church council of the Breslau Free Church, for example, addressed a letter to the bishops<sup>31</sup> of Bavaria, Hannover, and Mecklenburg as follows: "The powers within and without Germany which have the determined will to Calvinize our country, insofar as it is not Roman, are extremely powerful. We need not explain this here in greater detail. It is impossible to resist these powers successfully unless confessionally conscious Lutherans refuse to enter into a false and God-displeasing church union. We can appreciate how loath you are to disrupt the unity of EKID, in which practically all the vitally active elements of German Protestantism are united, and we can understand your desire to liberate the Lutheran Church from the fatal danger of unionism by working toward a reorganization of the EKID as a federation. However, as the church developments since Treysa have clearly shown, we are convinced that this attempt will be a failure. Only one way remains open, namely, the separation from the EKID. Whether or not the Lutheran provincial churches will take this way is not in our domain."<sup>32</sup>

The *Landeskirchen* and the Free Churches seem to have understood one another but were moving in two different directions. Separation had been the free church solution to the Prussian Union. For the *Landeskirchen* it was the General Evangelical Lutheran Conference. History was repeating itself.

After Behnken and M. Graebner had visited all the different Lutheran leaders in the *Landeskirchen*, they spent an afternoon with the men of the *Schwabacher Konvent*, a conservative group meeting in Bavaria. Pastor Hopf reported this meeting with great excitement.

They attested with great vigor that in countless conversations with many representatives of the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* in Germany in different regions they had continually made an open witness against the conclusions of Treysa, so that one may have assurance from them [the bishops] almost always, the conclusions of Treysa may be no ultimate decision for the *Landeskirchen* and must be understood through particular interpretations. In regard to the communion concession, *Landesbischof* D. Meister has stressed, it may only

be considered in respect to exceptions and emergency situations in view of the refugee problem, whereas *Landesbischof* D. Dr. Lilje has declared, one can and will permit non-Lutheran communicants “only after examination.” If these and other clarifications of authoritative representatives of the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* are commonly serious—and the American brothers declare with rejoicing repeatedly that they must receive this and thereby will handle it according to the eighth commandment—then it may still not be too late for an appropriate solution of the German church-question according to the Lutheran confession, for then it must be above all possible to call forth the Lutheran bishops to an open declaration concerning their interpretation of the conclusions of Treysa. With great earnestness therefore the two brothers of the Missouri Synod carried the plea before us; we would not like it to come to a break before we had endeavored to the uttermost to rescue the *Landeskirchen* as such for the Lutheran Confession; we would like therefore to endeavor in personal discussion with the Lutheran bishops to present our concern and to indicate the decision that comes before the Lutheran *Landeskirchen*.<sup>33</sup>

Lilje and his fellow bishops had passed on a new interpretation of the situation, one which the Missouri Synod representatives were only too happy to receive. It seems to have been just what they wanted to hear—the Confessions were gaining influence and were rallying the true Lutherans. What was needed now was coordination and support so that these men could boldly confess. The confessional optimists of Germany and America had found common ground and a common cause.

In November of 1947 and January of 1948, two important bishops of the German church met the faculty at the St. Louis Seminary.<sup>34</sup> The first was Otto Dibelius of Berlin and Brandenburg.<sup>35</sup> He described the bleak economic picture but encouraged the faculty with his story about young men anxiously awaiting entrance into the study of theology. When asked whether Lutheranism would be overcome by unionism he spoke an emphatic “No!” There were Lutheran and Reformed churches side by side in his region, but each maintained its own confession. Dr. Hanns Asmussen was Chancellor of EKID and had, like many others, suffered in prison for his confession. When asked what he considered to be the primary task in Germany, he responded that it was to promote a sincere Lutheranism and asked for the LCMS’s support.<sup>36</sup>

With reference to relief work and the progress of Lutheranism in Germany, T. Graebner stated in the February 24 issue of the *Lutheran Witness*, “Even at this early date the evidence is multiplying that the labors of our emissaries to Europe have not been in vain.” He provided several examples of how Pieper and Walther were being well received and concluded the article with, “Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.”<sup>37</sup> The synodical leadership as a whole was excited about the interchange between EKID and the LCMS, but perhaps no one more than T. Graebner.

On April 9, Bishop Lilje wrote a circular letter to his pastors explaining that he was to take a trip to America. In it he made it

clear that he recognized the historic significance of the coming meetings of the VELKD and EKID at Eisenach in June of that year. The constitution of EKID was still preliminary, but he expected that it would be approved and made subject to ratification by individual *Landeskirchen*. He also expressed gratitude for the selfless effort of Brunotte, a member of the constitution committee. He then voiced the belief that all who take the gospel seriously in Germany would be pleased with this conclusion and rejected the opinions of critics from both ends of the theological spectrum. He claimed that “the decisive need of the Evangelical Church in Germany persists in the question, whether God will send to us a Spirit-powerful renewal of preaching.” He concluded by stating his hope that God would bestow sincerity and brotherliness on the men at Eisenach and that they would desire the greatest measure of earthly unity possible.<sup>38</sup>

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### *When asked whether Lutheranism would be overcome by unionism Dibelius spoke an emphatic “No!”*

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An interesting interchange took place between the recently returning Martin Graebner and his brother. Theodore Graebner wrote on the 27th of April,

I must tell you about the progress of the plans for my participation in [a] program of lectures to be delivered by Missouri Synod representatives at a gathering of German Lutheran clergy during the summer. The lectures are to be delivered between the dates June 23 and July 25, the place a Chautauqua bearing the name of Bad Boll, located near Stuttgart in Southern Germany (American Zone).

Martin responded on May 3. He expressed joy that his brother had been chosen to represent the Missouri Synod at Bad Boll and added some news about Bishop Lilje.

Bishop Lilje is now in America. I know him fairly well, having had four conversations with him. I consider him the ablest Lutheran in Germany. I [unclear] surmise Lorry Meyer had his reasons, but I cannot understand why he was not invited to the Stuttgart meetings in place of Wurm—Try to get him to St. Louis.

“Wurm” was Bishop of Wurttemberg and had been a leader in the Confessing Church during the war. He was perhaps unattractive as a participant for the Graebners because of his age (eighty years old!) and strong association with the EKID. The future of the church in Germany lay with younger men like Lilje.<sup>39</sup> On May 10 Theodore wrote, “I am much interested in your lines of May 8, especially in what you say about Bishop Lilje. We shall have him at St. Louis June 2.”<sup>40</sup>

### EISENACH AND BAD BOLL

Before leaving for Europe, T. Graebner wrote a brief article for the June 1 issue of the *Lutheran Witness* entitled “Revival of Interest in Doctrine.” It dealt with the theological situation not only in Europe but also in America.

Not only has the Lutheran Church in all lands witnessed a great upsurge of interest in confessional teaching, but Protestantism everywhere is again concerned with doctrine as the principal interest of the Church. . . . And the growth of confessionalism in the Lutheran Church is the observation that must give courage to every lover of doctrinal unity, no matter how much practice limps behind confession, not to speak of the contradiction which even some fundamentals of Lutheran belief still experience in certain areas.<sup>41</sup>

These statements express the deep confessional optimism of Graebner and a shift in his focus away from the traditional stance of Missouri. It had been consistently argued in the LCMS that church unity is based on agreement in both doctrine and practice.<sup>42</sup> But here Graebner departs from this emphasis and speaks of doctrine as the “principal interest of the Church.” What is most important is doctrinal unity, an approach not dissimilar from that of the General Council while it was experiencing a confessional awakening under such leaders as H. E. Jacobs and C. P. Krauth after the Civil War.

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*It had been consistently argued in the LCMS that church unity is based on agreement in both doctrine and practice.*

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The June 29 edition of the *Lutheran Witness* and the September edition of *CTM* reported the visit of Bishop Lilje to the campus of Concordia Seminary on June 1 and 2.<sup>43</sup> Since classes had ended, he was not able to address the student body, but had a meeting with the faculty. He spoke on the miserable condition of his homeland but had many positive things to say about the church. According to the report of W. Arndt in *CTM*’s “Theological Observer,” the bishop’s presentation included an explanation of his duties and concerns.

His task as *Landesbischof*, so he said, consists at present largely in making the ministers willing and courageous again to preach the Word of God, with the message of Christ at its center. “It is the Word that has to do it,” is one of his slogans. A matter of deep concern to him is the question whether Lutheranism will be able to maintain itself as a Church amid the strong efforts that are being made to deprive Lutheranism of its identity in the new alignments that are being formed.<sup>44</sup>

This type of soul-searching and “deep concern” is not evident in the extracts from Lilje’s earlier circular letter. Perhaps in this context the bishop felt he could speak more freely, or he was

acknowledging the concerns of his hearers as valid and important. In little more than a month he would have to face such issues head-on at Eisenach.

It is peculiar that the meeting of the EKID in Eisenach and the first Bad Boll conference should have overlapped in time. At Eisenach the VELKD was scheduled for July 6–8. EKID was to meet from July 9–15. Its constitution was established on July 13. The Bad Boll conference extended from June 23–25. There is no explanation in the correspondence as to why this overlap occurred. There may have been restrictions on when such meetings could have taken place since Bad Boll was organized with the help of the U.S. government. At any rate, it permitted theologians from both meetings to be in close proximity both before and after the conferences. Perhaps this was its aim.

### REACTIONS TOWARD EISENACH

The result of the Eisenach meeting was not well received by the Free Churches, who saw this as an abandonment of the Confessions. The main points of disagreement were still over the church versus federation issue and the communion policy. The opening sentence of the first article of the constitution said, “The Evangelical Church in Germany is a federation of Lutheran, Reformed, and *Unierte* churches.” This was a complete contradiction for the Free Churches. The fourth article read:

- (1) The Service of the Word and the administration of the sacraments happens in the member churches and congregations according to the order of their confessions. Agreements over pulpit and communion fellowship remain the task of the member churches.
- (2) Called servants of the Word will not prevent the service of preaching also in congregations of other confessions in the structure of the valid arrangements of member churches.
- (3) The orderly accomplishment of Holy Baptism is acknowledged, the same worth for all official acts.
- (4) Concerning the admittance to Holy Communion no full agreement persists with the EKID. In many member churches, members of one another in the EKID will permit valid confessions without restriction. In no member church will a member of one in the EKID valid confessions prevent the entrance to the table of the Lord, where pastoral responsibility or congregational relations bid the permission. The proper church membership and the arrangements concerning the united church-discipline remain intact in each case.<sup>45</sup>

While recognizing that differences of opinion existed within the member churches, it did not seem to leave much room for a pastor refusing someone to the Lord’s Table on the basis of confession.<sup>46</sup>

Also at this time Dr. Herman Sasse released a scathing evaluation of the new “church” in “The End of the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* of Germany”:

The “Evangelical Church in Germany” is neither church nor evangelical. It is a sect like the Methodists or Baptists, or correctly a crowd of sects. Their church author-



ity and the church authority of their member churches has become heretical and has no claim on obedience and intercession. The *Landesbischöfe* Wurm, Meiser, Lilje, Dibelius, and as they are all called, are what Ludwig Mueller and Joachim Hassenfelder and their buddies were in 1933. And the Confessing Lutheran Church can today do no other than the church governments (which the conclusions of Eisenach effect) have allowed or have approved, each a follower and each one obedient with the same declaiming enthusiasm with which Martin Niemöller and his need-federation first performed over against the Prussian Church government and the empire church authority.<sup>47</sup>

Sasse had had contacts with the LCMS for some time now, and his evaluations would do much to dampen the optimism that had been growing. Some, however, would not be willing to receive his criticism, T. Graebner in particular. His confessional optimism would become more evident in contrast with the sobering of his fellow workers.

Theodore Graebner returned from Europe sometime in September after attending the World Council of Churches meeting in Amsterdam as an observer.<sup>48</sup> His brother Martin wrote him on September 30,

Welcome back to America and hearty congratulations upon the fine work at Bad Boll. Now the great question: After Bad Boll—what? We must look upon that grand enterprise as the beginning and plan wisely and courageously for the future. No doubt there will be some important discussions about that question and I should like to have an opportunity to submit my own opinion. I leave it to you to see to it that I get that chance.

In the same month Graebner published his impressions of Germany in the *Cresset*. He summarized the great change underway in three points: (1) the Christian Church challenged Nazism, (2) Christians did not approve of the atrocities committed under Hitler, and (3) there was a rebirth of Christian interest, profession, and church life.

As a member of a group of American theologians who have been in daily contact for weeks with professors and clergymen from all parts of Germany, the writer will say that the prospects of a return of German Lutherans—40,000,000<sup>49</sup> in number, not counting millions of refugees—to a more confessional stand, to simple Christian faith and revitalized educational, literary, and missionary activities, are based on evidences that are beyond dispute.<sup>50</sup>

At the same time the *CTM* “Theological Observer” was trying to interpret what had happened at Eisenach. What was the relationship between EKID and VELKD? W. Arndt writes, “Some people would like to weld these three denominations into one Church. If we understood Bishop Hanns Lilje correctly, he and his group were strongly opposing every tendency of this kind.”

## THE DECLINE OF CONFSSIONAL OPTIMISM IN THE LCMS

While T. Graebner was celebrating the renewal of the Lutheran Church in Germany at every opportunity, President Behnken was growing more concerned with every letter which he received from Europe. On Sept. 30, Behnken wrote F. E. Mayer about some news he received from Pastor H. Katterfeld. While it was evident that no unity was achieved at Eisenach, *Landesbischof* Meiser felt himself to be in hot water on account of a disagreement with Bishop Wurm over the question of communion.

VELKD is on the defensive from the very start. That’s simply too bad. I fear that they have let themselves in for something. I am convinced that unless they take the offensive and make EKID come to terms (and I doubt that this will be done) conservative Lutheranism is in a sorry plight. Only God knows what will happen.<sup>51</sup>

The content of this letter was also to be sent to Dr. Bretscher and Dr. Graebner along with a copy of the *Grundordnung* of EKID. Six days later Behnken received an answer from Sasse who was in New York. He had written him concerning the letter from Katterfeld, and Sasse’s report was not at all positive. He explained that Bishop Meiser had obtained a “hangover” trying to interpret the decision of Eisenach in a Lutheran way. This was simply not going to work. EKID was *de facto* a union-church.<sup>52</sup>

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### *EKID was de facto a union-church.*

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According to the minutes of a meeting of the Board of Missions in Europe at Concordia Seminary in October, the different members in attendance expressed distress over what had taken place at Eisenach. The questions centered around articles 1 and 4 of the constitution. It was proposed in this meeting that they deal with EKID as they had with people who were involved in the lodge: educate and encourage. T. Graebner was present at this meeting, but it is not clear that he completely shared this concern.<sup>53</sup> The same questions arose that month in *CTM*’s “Theological Observer,” written by F. E. Mayer. He admitted that the faculty was not yet in possession of the constitution of the VELKD, which added further ambiguity. Graebner was receiving his own news from Europe, as a letter of December 3 from H. P. A. Hamann shows. Hamann assured Graebner that the criticism from Sasse was extreme and that the poor man was suffering from war psychosis. One should rather be hopeful about the German churches returning to the Lutheran Confessions.<sup>54</sup>

But in mid-December Behnken received news from Sasse that indicated something a little more extreme than war psychosis.

The *Landeskirche* of Bavaria means business. It demands of all its *Pfarrer* [pastors] that they submit to the entry into EKID. If anyone for conscience’ sake dares to speak against it, it means removal from office. “*Renitenten*” [the

obstant] are to be purged. They evidently are too much of a thorn in the flesh. I am well aware of the fact that not all of you agreed with me in my misgivings about the EKID. The above strengthens me in my position. I fear that Lutheranism is definitely at the “crossroads” in Germany and for that matter other countries as well. VELKD is not the answer as long as it is in EKID.<sup>55</sup>

Behnken had come to full agreement with the position of the Free Churches. The VELKD must separate in order to maintain its confession.

Again on December 28, Behnken heard from Sasse. This time he laments the situation in the Saxon Church and says concerning Lilje’s region,

Moreover, on January 13 the decision passes concerning resistance in Hannover. It will go the same way there as with us. Some will end up in the Free Churches; the rest will remain in office with wounded consciences.<sup>56</sup>

That Lilje was content with the relationship of the VELKD in EKID is indicated by a brief letter to Graebner on January 6, 1949:

We hope that after the period of constitutional reorganization in the EKID we can come to a period of quiet work, because it is clear not only to me that the decisions concerning the worth or unworthiness of our plans for new construction depend on the pulpits and in the congregations. Therefore we pray that God grant us powerful witnesses of the Gospel and teachers of the church who are firmly grounded in our confession.<sup>57</sup>

The Bishop of Hannover was not seeking separation but rest. This time of quiet work would demonstrate the value of the federation.

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### *Dibelius explained that Sasse had been under the influence of radicals.*

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EKID had its first synodical convention on January 9–13, 1949. T. Graebner joyously reports this event, seeing it as strong confirmation of their earlier interpretation that Confessional Lutheranism was on the rise.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, Bishops Dibelius and Lilje had been elected president and vice president ahead of the non-confessional Martin Niemöller. This was “a victory for the confessional Lutheran forces.” Dr. E. Theodore Bachmann of the ULCA remarked that there was a definite revival of confessionalism. Graebner concluded:

Considering the fact that the issue was centered about maintaining the Lutheran Church as a confessional body or merging it with the Reformed into a union Church, we certainly rejoice in the outcome. It means maintaining a policy of “Lutheran altars for Lutheran communi-

cants” and the preservation of the forty million Evangelical Lutherans of Germany as a Lutheran unit in the roster of Protestant denominations.<sup>59</sup>

In contrast, Behnken wrote to Bretscher, Graebner, Mayer, and Meyer that despite the fact that they now had the official constitution, it was being interpreted in widely different ways. “Personally, I cannot help but be saddened by its unionistic character. Unless the Lutheran element . . . will assert itself, Lutheranism is on the way out.”<sup>60</sup> In a personal letter Graebner responded positively to Behnken’s analysis and added,

Superintendent Martin<sup>61</sup> evidently doesn’t realize that in America we would even term the VELKD an arrangement which would demand greater unity in doctrine before the Missouri Synod could become a partner.<sup>62</sup>

By these words Graebner shows that despite his optimism he had not lost sight of the doctrinal differences within Lutheranism. Such differences were still great enough to prevent fellowship as it was then understood in the Missouri Synod. His determination to support the Confessional Awakening was undaunted, however.

### QUESTIONS FOR THE LANDESKIRCHEN

In order to confirm the news from Germany and learn the various ways in which the constitution was being interpreted, Graebner wrote a letter to many of the leading bishops and theologians in VELKD.<sup>63</sup> It concerned the criticism of Dr. Sasse and two basic questions: (1) Have the *Landeskirchen* given up their independence in matters of confession, work, and discipline? (2) Is the congregation or EKID sovereign in such matters? Graebner added that he knew there were still liberals within the church, but was much heartened by the literature that was appearing, most of which was soundly Lutheran.

President Dibelius responded shortly and declared that he was sorry about the criticism of Sasse, which he himself had not read. He explained that Sasse had been under the influence of radicals—whom, specifically, he did not know. He assured him that the effort to follow the theology and practice of the Lutheran Reformation had never been stronger than at the present. This was true of both Lutheran and *Unierte* churches. All the *Landeskirchen* greatly valued their independence. Neither the congregation nor EKID were sovereign but rather the *Landeskirchen*. EKID was considered a federation and had nothing to do with the individual congregations. Dibelius remarked that he was convinced that Vice President Lilje would respond no differently than he had.<sup>64</sup>

The position of Graebner began to be noticed by those outside of the Missouri Synod. On March 8 he responded firmly to a letter from Prof. J. Sullivan of the Wisconsin Synod, who wanted to draw the shortcomings of Dibelius to his attention. Graebner defends Dibelius and the circumstances in which he finds himself in his *Landeskirche*:

I know that this is not the kind of institution which we approve of. I still subscribe to all the arguments against the union church and we made no secret of this position

at Bad Boll. But Dibelius is a Lutheran and so registered himself when the roll was called at Eisenach last summer. You may have your own interpretation of the action at Eisenach; we are not so quick in passing judgement but will investigate. I have written to more than a dozen men only last week to obtain their opinion on the points raised by Sasse. For all that I know, they will agree with Sasse. I am interested in the objective truth.<sup>65</sup>

In this letter Graebner began to speak in the first person plural as though he were speaking on behalf of the Missouri Synod. This was bound to lead to misunderstanding in an already confusing environment. In this manner he described his position toward Sasse.

We do want to know “where is the essential difference between EKID and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ” but we do not share Sasse’s judgment regarding German Lutheranism. When we gave him a farewell dinner last September and he made a very pessimistic farewell talk on the subject of conditions in Germany, Dr. Mayer, myself, and Dr. Sieck voiced our disagreement and urged him to remain with the State Church and bear testimony until it is evident that hearts are hardened against the testimony of sound doctrine.<sup>66</sup>

It is not at all clear that Graebner still spoke with the same conviction as these men had a year earlier when optimism was at its height. Things had dramatically changed, particularly with President Behnken, who, while still committed to making a difference in the German churches, did regard the situation as most desperate.

#### THE PFARRER HOPF CASE

Prior to the trip to Bad Boll II, Graebner provoked some problems between himself and Pastor Hopf with letters to Bishop Meiser. In one letter Graebner stated that he could not at all agree with Pastor Hopf and his criticisms of EKID and VELKD. He said:

He who had studied the first sources, the writings of Hopf and others that appeared a year before . . . [would have] noted how in important points such changes in wording had been undertaken so that the way into every unionism had been possibly embraced in the Federation.<sup>67</sup>

A copy of this letter (which contained further criticisms) was sent not only to Meiser but also Lilje, Dibelius, and Kressel. As a result Meiser cracked down on Hopf, who became deeply angered. He immediately wrote to President Behnken to find out whether Graebner spoke for the synod or for himself.<sup>68</sup> This became known as the “Hopf case” and demonstrated the divisions among the Missouri Synod representatives at Bad Boll II.

On the same day Pastor Hopf sent a five-page letter dealing with the matter and explaining to Graebner the trouble it had caused him, having been separated from his communion.<sup>69</sup> Graebner quickly responded to try to explain that the synod was

not making conclusions about EKID and that they had much to learn about the status of the *Landeskirchen*. He concluded the letter with the words *Gott befohlen und seien Sie mir nicht böse!*—“God keep you, and don’t be angry with me!”<sup>70</sup>

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### *Graebner began to speak in the first person plural as though he were speaking on behalf of the Missouri Synod.*

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After the representatives had left for Bad Boll, Behnken corresponded with Vice President Herman Harms to explain the “Hopf Case” and how he should handle “G[raebner]”:

The point in which I am much interested in this whole affair is that our G. saw fit again to resort to some letter writing and to send a carbon copy of a letter which he wrote to *Pfarrer* Hopf to Bishop Meiser . . . I wrote to G. immediately. . . . I think you should tell him that some of the men in the Free Churches were rather perturbed by his letter to *Pfarrer* Hopf. He may at once classify these men as psychopathic cases, but by all means don’t permit such an “out” to stand. You know that is one of his “outs” always. At the farewell meeting with the men who are going to Bad Boll I spoke very frankly and earnestly. I tried to point out to them that they will face a more difficult situation this year than last year. I am inclined to believe that all the men realize it with the exception of G. . . . He must realize that every ear will be focused to hear whether Missouri might be ready to yield in some point. . . . Encourage the men to remain steadfast, unmovable.<sup>71</sup>

Behnken also wrote a private letter to Pastor Hopf and assured him that Graebner did not speak for the LCMS in this matter. The two men seem to have been reconciled, since this correspondence came to a close.<sup>72</sup>

#### T. GRAEBNER STANDS ALONE

The 1949 Bad Boll Conference was to run from June 1 through July 13. Unlike the earlier conference, the first session would be under the direction of the VELKD; the second would be under the American portion of the LWF; the third and fourth would be led by the Missouri Synod.<sup>73</sup> The hope was that such a free conference would bring the Lutheran Churches of the world closer to one another in doctrine and work. The Missouri Synod’s delegation included Dr. T. Graebner, Dr. J. T. Mueller, Dr. P. Bretscher, Prof. M. Franzmann, Rev. A. C. Mueller, and Paul Koenig. They were led by H. Harms, Vice President of Synod.<sup>74</sup> The *Lutheran Witness* carried the news of the meetings and, with the contributions of T. Graebner, continued to focus on the revival of confessional Lutheranism in Europe. Correspondence between Lawrence Meyer and President Behnken remained concerned with T. Graeb-

ner's optimism. "I hope that he [Graebner] is not too optimistic; but a letter from Koenig, a copy of which is also in the making for you, confirms Graebner's evaluation [about Bad Boll]."<sup>75</sup>

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***Lilje has made purity of doctrine and administration of the sacraments alone the characteristic of the Lutheran Church.***

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During the sessions T. Graebner came under the sharp scrutiny of Dr. Karl Arndt<sup>76</sup> and a Miss Renata Kauert. Their letters were filled with complaints.

Dr. Arndt tried his best to prevent G's coming to Bad Boll. I have never been able to understand why he is opposed to him. Did he do anything to arouse Dr. Arndt's ire last year? Does Dr. Arndt know that G. slept away some of his time during sessions? Does he consider G. a man of inferior ability? . . . It is too bad that G., who is over there by invitation of the military government and even has his way paid . . . does not attend sessions regularly. . . . The good man should know better. He should be attending to his business. I had a letter from him in which he states that he did not find time to read the copies of letters which I sent him and that he had to write to me during sessions because they were all so very busy. It was interesting to me also to hear that he told Miss Kauert that he did not want to make the trip to Bad Boll this time and created the impression that he was forced to go. If there was anyone in the group whom we did not have to invite a second time it was G.<sup>77</sup>

These comments seem a bit harsh. Dr. Graebner was now seventy-three years old. Faced as he was with full days of intricate theological discussion, it is not difficult to imagine his weariness and potential for irritability. Not only that, but he now largely stood alone in his optimistic view of conditions in the German church. While the other leaders of the LCMS could speak positively of the changes in Europe, they had determined to support the position of the Free Churches over against the *Landeskirchen*. Their perspective on the confessional awakening had come full circle.

### THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In 1946 Lilje published a short book about Luther in which he reviewed much of the history of the Reformation, noting misinterpretations of the reformer based on his personal study.<sup>78</sup> In the third portion of the work he applies the principles of the Reformation to the modern church situation. His chapter on "The Church" can be most helpful for understanding why the theologians of the Missouri Synod considered him like-minded as well as why he did not resist joining the EKID.

According to Lilje, one of the unique features of the Lutheran Church is its greatly varied polity. "The Lutheran

Church is basically quite indifferent toward all forms of ecclesiastical organization and polity."<sup>79</sup> This strongly distinguishes it from the Roman church with its Pope:

Polity has no religious significance in the Lutheran Church . . . the Lutheran Church can assume so many forms of historical existence, varying all the way from an officially governed state church with a king as its titular head . . . to the independent, democratically organized, flourishing congregations in North America. All of them, however, are Lutheran because all of them share one indispensable characteristic, purity in the teaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments.<sup>80</sup>

Within this compliment to the American churches is a subtle theological distinction. Here Lilje has made purity of doctrine and administration of the sacraments *alone* the characteristic of the Lutheran Church, in contrast to the Augsburg Confession, which defines the one holy Christian Church as "the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel."<sup>81</sup>

If pure word and sacraments are the marks of the Lutheran Church, then what are the marks of the *una sancta* for Lilje? He explains that the church is "wherever Christ is preached and accepted in faith."<sup>82</sup> For example:

Christ is present in the teaching, as far as it is pure and authentic without human additions and qualifications, centered in him alone. He, who himself is the Word of God, manifests himself in the preaching of the church. Where he is proclaimed in faith and received in faith, there, and there alone, is the church.<sup>83</sup>

Lilje mentions another mark of the church in this chapter: "The true church is always a suppressed and persecuted church."<sup>84</sup> But all these marks can be summarized under one "central" mark according to his distillation of Luther, that is, "the distinguishing mark of the church is the presence of Christ."<sup>85</sup>

Nowhere do the Confessions define the presence of Christ as the distinguishing mark of the church, although they consistently note that Christ is indeed present in his church. The trouble with defining the mark of the church as the presence of Christ is that the mark of the church has been removed from the realm of objectivity (word and sacraments) to that of subjectivity (something which Lilje himself wanted to prevent among the Lutheran churches). The Apology makes this evident:

The church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like other civic governments, however, but it is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts. To make it recognizable, this association has outward marks, the pure teaching of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments in harmony with the Gospel of Christ.<sup>86</sup>

The marks of the *una sancta* are the pure teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with



the gospel. It is certainly true that where the church is, Christ is present, or else the church could not exist. But how are God's gifts delivered to this communion in Christ? Through the word and the sacraments. These are the *notae ecclesiae*. To distill them further finally means to base fellowship on something other than objective means and to make article VII of the Augustana a confession concerning a sectarian group and not the *una sancta*.<sup>87</sup> Whether consciously or otherwise, this was the result of Lilje's description of the church and approach to fellowship.

The church is not church in a Platonic sense; rather, it truly exists. It has the pure gospel and the foundation, "that is, the true knowledge of Christ and faith."<sup>88</sup> This faith, which the Apology calls the "foundation" of the church, is not simply the *fides qua creditur*, but is also the *fides quae creditur*, as the German translation helps us to understand. It is *den Glauben*,<sup>89</sup> "the faith," that which was delivered by Christ to the apostles and so also to us despite the wood, hay, and stubble that some mistakenly have heaped upon it. "The writings of the holy Fathers show that even they sometimes built stubble on the foundation but that this did not overthrow their faith."<sup>90</sup>

Lilje's book is a bold defense of the Lutheran Confessions and Luther himself. He writes with an undaunted confidence about the future of the church:

The fact is that the only future the church can expect in the world is a church of Christ, where the presence of the Savior means everything, and problems of external organization are ultimately unimportant.<sup>91</sup>

Out of the recent conflict is now arising a new church that will resemble much more closely that of the first five centuries.<sup>92</sup> "The Lutheran Church has the least reason to fear these changes, for she has never attached undue importance to institutional or organizational structure."<sup>93</sup> These words help explain Lilje's attitude toward the EKID. The Lutheran Church with its strong confession and former wide variety of structure has nothing to fear in this new organization. "She will take her Bible, the Word of God, into the coming era, she will sing her hymns in a new age. The Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the confessions of faith will be the same amidst the changing conditions of life."<sup>94</sup> His confessional optimism led him boldly into the new federation.

### CONCLUSION

It was a similar confidence in the Confessions that led the Missouri Synod into dialogue with the German churches after World War II. There was a true sense of historic opportunity, a chance to see the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* confessing with them after so many years of disagreement. This hope peaked around the time of the first Bad Boll conference and slowly sank afterward. While the synod continually had contacts with the Free Churches and with Bishop Meiser of Bavaria, the meetings with Lilje inspired them to greater efforts, greater optimism. Here was a confessionally sound Lutheran province with a capable, dynamic, young bishop. As they interpreted his words, he was the future of the Lutheran Church in Germany.

In some respects they were correct. Lilje was very much the future of German Lutheranism. But it was a future within the

EKID and not separately, as the Missouri Synod had envisioned. Sasse explained the problem in a letter to T. Graebner on June 10, the end of the first session of Bad Boll II.

At no time has anyone yet questioned me concerning singling out [this] one particularly weighty point, that there has been and is a reawakening to Lutheran theology in Germany. I can only imagine that you have not understood or have understood very unclearly the obvious in the circles of your theology. I have repeatedly written about the history of this rise in both the German and the English languages and corresponded concerning it also with the late Dr. Fuerbringer. It appears to me, most honorable *Herr Doktor*, that in America you follow the development of theology in Europe too little and have formed a stereotypical idea of it. This is no rebuke against your church, but only the observation of one's fate. With us it was no different. The surprise at the liveliness of the Missouri Synod among the German theologians was just as great as your surprise over the fact that the liberalism of the beginning of the twentieth century was overcome among us.<sup>95</sup>

He goes on to say that "Neo-orthodoxy" has failed to overcome liberalism at two points: on the questions of Scripture and confession. Lilje, however, also presents a new view of the church based on a reinterpretation of the Augsburg Confession. Sasse complains that Meiser, Lilje, and above all Dibelius see the Free Churches as sects. A new ecclesiology was in place, one that ranged beyond the Lutheran confession of Christ and his Word.

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***"In America you follow the development of theology in Europe too little and have formed a stereotypical idea of it."***

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Theodore Graebner would not receive Sasse's evaluation. His hope was still for a united Lutheran effort that was based more on unity of confession than on unity of practice.<sup>96</sup> But his own version of unity within diversity would not carry. Despite similarity of confession, good will, and mutual respect, the fellowship decisions of the prior century in both Germany and America would prevail over confessional optimism.

The destruction of National Socialism and the German nation during World War II provided the LCMS an opportunity to exercise both her faith and compassion. It was also seen as an opportunity to exercise influence. Once again the confessional Lutheran churches in America find themselves in an era of opportunity, this time in the former Soviet Union and its satellite nations. May God guide them as they labor to supply the needs of Christians throughout Europe and the East. **LOGIA**

## NOTES

1. F. E. Mayer Collection at the Concordia Historical Institute, Supplement II, Box 1, File 6. The letter was prompted by a telegram from Pastor Daib in Brooklyn, New York (F.E.M. Supp. II, B1, F6), which reads, "Reply of Breslau and President Petersen is that counter proposal on Zurich accepted. Urgently request immediate sending of synodical representative for cleaning up important church questions." It is dated June 13, 1947. At this time the Free Churches of Germany were discussing a union.
2. The details of this history are provided in E. Clifford Nelson, *The Rise of World Lutheranism: An American Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 17–45.
3. Nelson, 298–349. Also see the articles on "German Christians" and "Confessing Church" in F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).
4. See "Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod" and "Union Movements" in Erwin L. Lueker, ed., *Lutheran Cyclopedia* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975).
5. Carl S. Meyer, *Moving Frontiers* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 422–425.
6. Meyer, 428.
7. Dr. Arndt was the editor of *Concordia Theological Monthly (CTM)* and professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.
8. "Theological Observer," *CTM* 16 (December 1945): 868–869.
9. "Theological Observer," *CTM* 17 (November 1946): 861.
10. *CTM* 17 (November 1946): 876–878. Dr. Mayer was a professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.
11. "The Evangelical Church in Germany has been led in resistance of the false doctrine of the time and in the struggle against a state-church centralization toward an ecclesiastically grounded inner unity, which extends beyond the German Evangelical Church-federation of 1922. The church unity appeared first in the Confessional Synod in Barmen, Dahlem, and Augsburg. It served the work of the ecclesiastical unification effort and the *Landeskirchen* leader-conference. Today may we give form to this unity in a tentative ordering of EKID." Translated from Heinz Brunotte, *Die Grundordnung der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* (Berlin: L. V. H. Herbert Renner, 1954), 300. The German reads: "Die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) ist in Abwehr der Irrlehren der Zeit und im Kampf gegen einen staatskirchlichen Zentralismus zu einer kirchlich gegründeten inneren Einheit geführt worden, die über den deutschen Evangelischen Kirchenbund von 1922 hinausreicht. Diese Einheit ist zuerst auf den Bekenntnissynoden in Barmen, Dahlem und Augsburg sichtbar geworden. Ihr diene die Arbeit des kirchlichen Einigungswerkes und der Landeskirchenfuhrerkonferenz. Heute dürfen wir dieser Einheit in einer vorläufigen Ordnung der EKD Gestalt geben."
12. Cross and Livingstone, 975.
13. In commenting about attempts at union between the Free Churches, Mayer says, "May God grant that this union movement bring the leaders of the Lutheran State churches back to the Lutheran Confessions and particularly become an instrument of re-vitalizing the Lutheran congregations." He also notes the meeting of several *Landeskirchen* in the interest of forming a United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany: Bavaria, Wuertemberg, Hannover, Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Braunschweig, Lippe, and Luebeck. Thuringia, Saxony, and Mecklenburg did not attend. These efforts are attributed to Bishop Meiser of Bavaria, who is described as "the chief opponent of the plan which would unite all State churches in one large Church or fellowship, known as EKID. He does not want to dissolve the EKID, but sees in it only a federation of the various confessional state churches for co-operation in externals." "Theological Observer," *CTM* 17 (December 1946).
14. *Lutheran Witness*, January 28, 1947, 27.
15. Letter of Feb. 1, 1947 in the W. Arndt Collection at the Concordia Historical Institute [CHI], Box 8, File 3.
16. *Lutheran Witness*, February 11, 1947, 34.
17. An excellent summary of T. Graebner's life was provided by P. Bretscher in *CTM* 22 (January 1951): 1–8. An extensive bibliography of his writings can be found in Jerrald Kort Pfabe, "Theodore Graebner: Apologist for Missouri Synod Lutheranism" (doctoral dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1972).
18. The official publication of the American Lutheran Conference.
19. *Lutheran Witness*, May 6, 1947, 143.
20. T. Graebner Collection in CHI, B.45, F.7. The letter is dated Sept. 8, 1947. It is likewise interesting for its characterization of the July 1947 synodical convention assembled at Chicago. Describing some difficulties he says, "But there are better days coming. Although we had an extremely negative bunch on Committee No. 3, the spirit of the convention was the opposite of 1944. With very little effort we could have had a majority resolution for joining the National Lutheran Council." It is to be remembered that the "Statement of the Forty-Four" came out a year after the 1944 convention. T. Graebner had been a signer of this statement. The Graebner brothers appear to have been more interested in joining National Lutheran Council than in healing the Synodical Conference. He says that those aligning themselves with the little Norwegian Synod and Wisconsin were greatly harmed by the statements of Romoser and Albrecht "to the effect that 'avoid them' of Romans 16 may have to be applied to the signers of the Chicago statement." For this reason M. Graebner would not have to fear the criticism of this group. T. Graebner shows his optimism in these matters when he says, "I believe that a certain stage in our synodical attitude belongs in the past."
21. The mission report of the 1947 convention on the German *Landeskirchen* is quite negative. The Free Churches are described more favorably. See *Reports and Memorials: Synodical Centennial Convention* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 296–301. Under "Miscellaneous Matters" EKID is called a "war-born confessing church . . . organized under the aegis of Bishop Wurm of Württemberg, backed by the World Council of Churches, which, in turn, is fostered by the Federal Council of America." Bishop Meiser is seen as the leader opposing this church organization. He had the synod's support from the start. The goal of pulpit and altar fellowship with an Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany was not expected to be gained within a generation (*Reports and Memorials*, 519–529).
22. T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.45, F.7. On October 17 he writes that they will be meeting Bishop Lilje.
23. T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.45, F.7.
24. "Felicitation: Hanns Lilje," *Lutheran World* 21 (1974): 404–406. Also "In Memoriam—Hanns Lilje," *Lutheran World* 24 (1977): 74–75.
25. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill, eds., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement* (London: SPCK, 1954), 341, 429–430.
26. Nelson, 284–297.
27. A personal account of his trials in prison is recorded in Lilje, *Im Finstern Tal* (Nürnberg: Latare-Verlag, 1947). A translation of this was prepared by Olive Wyon, *The Valley of the Shadow* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1950).
28. "Theological Observer," *CTM* 18 (October 1947): 784–786.
29. This is the second point of difficulty in the formation of EKID. The conclusions of the Luther council (*Lutherrat*) to the draft of the constitution of EKID provide an explanation of the article on fellowship. "According to Article 1,1 of the constitution, full pulpit and communion fellowship passes within the VELKD. This settlement has been so understood as thereby refusing the pulpit and communion fellowship to all not adhering to the VELKD. Speaking to that end: It is a step beyond the former *Landeskirche* Rule when within the circle of the churches adhering to the VELKD (which according to article 13 of the constitution want to exercise a uniform doctrinal discipline) is practiced full pulpit and communion fellowship. Moreover evangelical Christians out from non-Lutheran churches who desire to partake as guests at a Lutheran communion will also be permitted. We will of course permit the ordained brothers from other churches in individual cases the service of the word at our churches as at the time of the *Kirchenkampf*. However, the fundamental permission of the pulpit and communion fellowship can not be pronounced to each office-bearer of the united churches in the EKD as far as we are concerned, while it is not in view, to what extent they shall have used a doctrinal discipline in the EKD. We are prepared to clarify in theological language the possibilities of a communion fellowship beyond the sphere of the VELKD."

This awkward statement seems to have been intended to include those members of the EKID who had been properly catechized while excluding those who had not. Here they must have in mind those union congregations which use the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Catechism, but this is not stated definitively. For the German of the above see Brunotte, 306.

29. "Theological Observer," *CTM* 18 (October 1947): 786. Point 4 reads, "There exists agreement herein, that the evangelical congregations' members should therefore not be excluded from celebration of Holy Communion since they belong to one another in the valid confession of the EKD." Translated from Brunotte, 308. The German reads: "Es besteht Übereinstimmung darin, dass evangelische Gemeindeglieder nicht darum von der Feier des Heiligen Abendmahls ausgeschlossen sein sollen, weil sie einem anderen in der EKD geltenden Bekenntnis angehören."

30. "Memorandum Concerning the Church Situation in Germany," *CTM* 18 (November 1947): 824.

31. The bishop of Bavaria was Meiser, of Hannover was Lilje, and of Mecklenburg was Beste.

32. *CTM* 18 (December 1947): 905–906. VELKD is the *Vereinigte Evang.-Luth. Kirche in Deutschland*, a federation of the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* within the EKID.

33. Translated from the F. E. Mayer Collection at CHI, Supp II, B.1, F.14. The citation is on page three of an Abschrift dated Nov. 17, 1947, and signed by Hopf. The German reads: "Sie bezeugten mit grossem Nachdruck, dass sie in zahllosen Besprechungen mit vielen Vertretern des landeskirchlichen Luthertums in Deutschland in den verschiedenen Gegenden stets ein offenes Zeugnis gegen die Beschlüsse von Treysa abgelegt hätten, dass man ihnen aber fast immer versichert habe, die Beschlüsse von Treysa seien keine endgültige Entscheidung der Landeskirchen und müssten von bestimmten Interpretationen aus verstanden werden. Hinsichtlich der Abendmahls-Zulassung habe Landesbischof D. Meister betont, es sei nur an Ausnahmen und Notzustände angesichts des Flüchtlingsproblems gedacht, während Landesbischof D. Dr. Lilje erklärt habe, man könne und wolle nichtlutherische Kommunikanten 'nur nach Prüfung' zulassen. Wenn diese und andere Erklärungen massgebender Vertreter der lutherischen Landeskirchen ernst gemeint seien—and die amerikanischen Brüder erklärten wiederholt feierlich, dass sie dies annehmen müssten und dabei nach dem 8. Gebot handeln wollten,—dann sie es doch noch nicht zu spät für eine dem lutherischen Bekenntnis entsprechende Lösung der deutschen Kirchenfrage, dann müsse es vor allem möglich sein, die lutherischen Bischöfe zu einer öffentlichen Erklärung über ihre Interpretation der Beschlüsse von Treysa zu veranlassen. Mit grossem Ernst trugen uns deshalb die beiden Brüder von der Missourisynode die Bitte vor; wir möchten es nicht zu einem Bruch kommen lassen, ehe wir nicht das Äusserste versucht hatten, um die Landeskirchen als solche für das lutherische Bekenntnis zu retten; wir möchten deshalb versuchen, in einer persönlichen Aussprache mit den lutherischen Bischöfen unsere Anliegen vorzutragen und auf die Entscheidung hinzuweisen, vor der die lutherischen Landeskirchen stehen."

34. The seminary had also been visited by Prof. Nygren of Sweden. W. Arndt described him in a letter to Rev. Madson dated Oct. 21, 1947, as an outstanding Luther scholar "who feels that conservative Lutheranism needs the strong confessional emphasis of the Missouri Synod." W. Arndt Collection at CHI, B.8, F.3.

35. *CTM* 18 (December 1947): 417–418.

36. *CTM* 19 (February 1948): 45. Concerning a later letter from Dr. Asmussen in the March issue of *Lutheran Witness* (74), T. Graebner writes, "consistent attempts are being made to advance a unionistic church endeavor in Germany, but that the churches of the Province of Saxony and of Pomerania have declared to operate under the name Lutheran." Then follows a quote from Asmussen, "To that extent my labors have not been in vain." In the May issue of *CTM* the "Theological Observer" reports that an attempt to remove Asmussen from office was taking place while he was in America. The demand for this was made by the Theological Society of Wuertemberg, followers of Karl Barth. The report was taken from *The Lutheran Companion* dated March 10. *CTM* 19 (May 1948): 371.

37. Eccl. 11:1.

38. Portions of this letter were typed up on a single sheet of paper and distributed with a Faculty Opinion from the *Lutherische Theologische*

*Hochschule* at Oberursel dated May 18, 1948. A copy of this was sent to President Behnken, but it is not clear when he received it. The faculty at Oberursel was displeased with much of what Lilje said. They call Brunotte a man entrapped by the spirit of Calvinism and the Enthusiasts and think that if Lilje and the *Landeskirche* of Hannover took the Lutheran Confessions seriously then they would ask Brunotte to resign. If a man such as Lilje can overlook the problems in EKID, then truly one cannot rightly discern the positions of others. Both documents can be found in the F. E. Mayer Collection at CHI, Supp. II, B.1, F.6.

39. Already on January 10, 1948, K. J. Arndt had written to L. Meyer about preparations for a theological conference between theologians of the LCMS and the EKID. "Similarly, although we want to have Lilje, Meiser, and perhaps Hahn (*Saechsische Landeskirche*) present as guests . . . we do not want to put them on the spot by requiring a theological paper or discussion of them. This is an important consideration in church diplomacy." T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.43, F.4.

L. Meyer states the purpose of the Bad Boll conference in *Lutheran Witness*, June 1, 1948, 180. "The purpose of the Seminars is the building and strengthening of the Lutheran Church in Germany . . . [our representatives] are the bearers of great spiritual treasures which will help to rebuild the Lutheran Church in Germany . . . They will be serving . . . to help rebuild a land that has not only suffered unprecedented physical, but also spiritual destruction, and which is experiencing today the first manifestations of a trend toward a new confessional awakening."

40. All three of these letters are from the T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.43, F.4. T. Graebner was not in St. Louis when Lilje addressed the faculty. The representatives of Bad Boll had already started for Europe on the S.S. America on June 2.

41. *Lutheran Witness*, June 1, 1948, 171.

42. Meyer, 418, "That, since for true unity we need not only this doctrinal agreement but also agreement in practice, we state with our synodical fathers that according to the Scriptures and the Lutheran confessional writings Christian practice must harmonize with Christian doctrine."

43. *Lutheran Witness*, June 29, 1948, 209–210. *CTM* 19 (September 1948): 685–686.

44. *CTM* 19 (September 1948): 685–686.

45. Translated from Brunotte, 319–323. The German reads: "1. Der Dienst am Wort und die Verwaltung der Sakramente geschieht in den Gliedkirchen und Gemeinden nach der Ordnung ihres Bekenntnisses. Vereinbarungen über Kanzel- und Abendmahlsgemeinschaft bleiben Aufgabe der Gliedkirchen. 2. Berufenen Dienern am Wort wird der Dienst der Verkündigung auch in Gemeinden eines anderen Bekenntnisses im Rahmen der geltenden Bestimmungen der Gliedkirchen nicht verwehrt. 3. Der ordnungsmässige Vollzug der Heiligen Taufe wird in allen Gliedkirchen anerkannt; dasselbe gilt für alle Amtshandlungen. 4. Über die Zulassung zum Heiligen Abendmahl besteht innerhalb der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland keine volle Übereinstimmung. In vielen Gliedkirchen werden Angehörige eines anderen in der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland geltenden Bekenntnisses ohne Einschränkung zugelassen. In keiner Gliedkirche wird einem Angehörigen eines in der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland geltenden Bekenntnisses der Zugang zum Tisch des Herren verwehrt, wo seelsorgerliche Verantwortung oder gemeindliche Verhältnisse die Zulassung gebieten. Die rechtliche Kirchenzugehörigkeit und die Bestimmungen über die allgemeine Kirchenzucht bleiben in jedem Falle unberührt."

46. The Free Churches issued an evaluation of the constitution (October 31, 1948), which stated that EKID had instituted pulpit fellowship between varying confessions. In T. Graebner's personal copy he has written in the margin at this point, "Not true!!"

47. F. E. Mayer Collection at CHI, Supp. II, B.1, F.15. p. 1. It is dated September 1948 and signed by Sasse.

48. Also attending were Dr. Paul Bretscher and Prof. A. Fuerbringer. T. Graebner was given a press seat. Graebner notes that he saw Lilje at the conference but that the bishop had not attended Bad Boll. He was greatly heartened by the lack of the old liberalism but noted that there was much unclear thinking on Christian fellowship (*Lutheran Witness*, September 21, 1948, 305–306). "He [Graebner] observed no effort on the part of anyone to suppress the truth or to demand that it be compromised or an effort to



minimize the differences and to exalt the agreements" (*Lutheran Witness*, October 19, 1948, 335). The gospel was evident but the joint communion service could not be justified. He felt the voice of Lutheranism was plainly heard. "Whenever Lutherans spoke, they placed their Lutheranism in the foreground; all others had little to say about their denomination and its creed." Dibelius, Niemöller, Nygren, and Lilje receive special mention in the article. The latter, according to Graebner, asserted in his committee report that "no effort to achieve unity by ignoring the differences can prevail." Similar statements came from Nygren, bearing "double weight" because he was president of the Lutheran World Federation (336). Graebner admired Dr. Visser't Hooft and remarked that "so much good can be said of the Amsterdam meeting" because of his efforts. Still much was deplorable (337).

Lilje was chairman of Section 1, which had the topic "The Universal Church in God's Design." The summaries of reports on this meeting are recorded in W. A. Visser't Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (London: SCM, 1949). Lilje is reported to have recognized the deeply felt sense of unity (57). He felt that the statement drafted by the section was one of the "strongest affirmations of unity there had been" (63).

49. This number includes the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* as well as those *Unitierte* congregations using Luther's Catechism and the Augsburg Confession.

50. "Some Impressions of Germany," *Cresset* (September 1948), 20–21.

51. F. E. Mayer Collection at CHI, Supp II, B.1, F.15.

52. F. E. Mayer Collection Supp II, B.1, F.15.

53. Minutes for Oct. 21–22, 1948, from the T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.43, F.7.

54. T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.43, F.4.

55. Letter from Behnken to representatives at Bad Boll dated December 23. It is from the T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.45, F.6. Behnken closed the letter by saying that he did not feel that Bad Boll had been in vain. "The Lord never permits faithful testimony to be without some results, Is. 55. For that reason we must work diligently for another Bad Boll."

56. Translated from T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.45, F.8. The German reads: "Am 13.1. faellt uebrigens die Entscheidung ueber die Resistenz in Hannover. Es wird dort so gehen wie bei uns. Einige werden in der Freikirche enden, der Rest wird mit verwundetem Gewissen in Amt bleiben."

57. Translated from the T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.45, F.6. The German reads: "Wir hoffen, dass nach der Periode der Verfassungsneuordnung in der EKID wir zu einer Periode der ruhigen Arbeit kommen können. Denn es ist nicht nur mir klar, dass die Entscheidungen über den Wert oder Unwert unserer Neubaupläne auf den Kanzeln und in den Gemeinden fallen. Darum bitten wir, dass Gott uns vollmächtige Zeugen des Evangeliums und im Bekenntnis festgegründete Lehrer der Kirche schenke."

58. In a letter of March 18, 1948, Asmussen had written to Behnken that although things were a bit murky he was not despondent. He felt that the true Lutherans would be awakened soon and that there were signs of this happening. In T. Graebner's copy of this letter he has written alongside Asmussen's comments, "The result was Bethel, Jan. 1949." T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.136, F.6.

59. *Lutheran Witness*, Feb. 22, 1949, 51–52.

60. Feb. 15, 1949, in T. Graebner collection at CHI, B.45, F.6.

61. A leader among the Free Churches of Germany.

62. Letter to Behnken, Feb. 17. From T. Graebner at CHI, B.45, F.6.

63. On February 28 the letter was sent to Drs. Meiser, Dibelius, Lilje, Stroh, Kinder, Asmussen, Kressel, Schlink, and Rektor Merz. On March 1 it was sent to Drs. Breit and Schumann. T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.45, F.8.

64. March 10, T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.45, F.8. Within Dibelius' own region the new pastors were ordained according to the Lutheran Confessions and not according to the old Prussian Union. But if a young man wished to be ordained according to the Reformed Confessions it would be handled by a moderator and not by Dibelius, since he was Lutheran. He had heard that Sasse was off to Australia in search of "true" Lutheranism.

65. T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.45, F.6.

66. T. Graebner retells the story in a letter of March 28 to Herman Harms. "I am still willing to read the argument both for and against Dr. Sasse's position. All of us who represented the Synod at Dr. Behnken's request last summer are of one and the same opinion—this is not the time for the Free Churches to make a *razzia* on the prostrate *Landeskirchen* and encourage the formation of the Free Church groups built up out of disgruntled minorities. We were just as unanimous in disapproving of the work in this direction performed by Rev. Daib. We are unanimous with reference to the pronouncements of Dr. Sasse. This brother has been so steeped in the system of church government prevailing in the State Church system that he views the 1948 EKID resolutions as a betrayal of the entire Lutheran position. Profs. Mayer, Bretscher and myself in vain tried to cure him of this prejudice when he was in St. Louis. One must know the background of Sasse's intense reactions to Dr. Meiser, to understand his position. It is absolutely certain that we are dealing with a neurosis, the same kind with which we have had such unpleasant contacts with the Norwegian Synod, and Wisconsin and their representatives in Missouri. To build an opinion on such testimony is bound to check the revival of Lutheranism which is unquestionably gaining strength in the *Landeskirchen*." That there was not a definite uniformity with regard to the matter is illustrated by an earlier comment: "I wish you would help us arrive at a uniform testimony in regard to this matter [the reaction of the Free Churches], because we shall certainly be called upon to render an opinion when we are visiting in Oberursel."

Again in this letter Graebner appeals to Bishop Lilje as the future of German Lutheranism. "I have a strong letter from my brother Martin pleading for favorable contacts with Bishop Lilje. He considers him the coming power in German Lutheranism. When we consider that more than two-thirds of all the Lutherans in the world are trying to get their bearings economically and spiritually the power of such leadership is evident."

67. Translated from letter of March 28; T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.45, F.8. The German reads: "Wer die ersten Vorlagen studiert hat, und die Schriften von Hopf und andern, die vor einem Jahr erschienen, und dann notiert, wie in wichtigen Punkten solche Aenderungen im Wortlaut vorgenommen worden sind, dass jedem Unionismus der Weg in den neuen Verband moeglichst verlegt worden ist." In an April 1 letter Hopf summarized the situations in the various *Landeskirchen*. He gives a lengthy assessment of Lilje's work in Hannover and is critical of what has taken place. He is likewise disturbed that the confessional element in the region has not acted but seems to be content to protest within the EKID rather than break away. From the H. Harms Collection at CHI, B.8, File—*Pfarrer Hopf Case*.

68. In this letter Hopf notes that Graebner has departed from the traditional stance of the Missouri Synod. At the foot of a letter from President Peterson on March 17 Behnken has written, "We must not let the Free churches down; neither in matters of physical relief nor in doctrinal matters." Lawrence Meyer Collection at CHI, B.40, File—Behnken.

69. H. Harms Collection at CHI, B.8, File—*Pfarrer Hopf Case*.

70. H. Harms Collection at CHI, B.8, File—*Pfarrer Hopf Case*.

71. Behnken also sent a letter to Graebner with much the same content, bidding him to reconcile with Pastor Hopf. Both letters are dated May 15. H. Harms Collection at CHI, B.8, File—Hopf Case.

72. Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf later served the *Freikirchen* as *Missionsdirektor* in Bleckmar and editor of their *Missionsblatt*. For more information about Hopf see *Unter einen Christus sein und streiten: Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf, D.D. Herausgegeben von Jobst Schöne und Volker Stolle* (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission, 1980). A section of Hopf's "Kurzer Überblick über den Kampf für das Lutherische Bekenntnis innerhalb der deutschen lutherischen Landeskirchen" provides an analysis of the effects of this struggle on the Hermannsburg Mission. It is critical of Lilje's actions and notes the difficult position that had been imposed upon the Lutheran congregations. H. Harms Collection at CHI, B.8, File—*Pfarrer Hopf Case*.

73. L. Meyer, *Lutheran Witness*, May 3, 1949, 141.

74. In an April 16 letter H. Harms responds to some correspondence from T. Graebner about Lilje. "I was privileged to have a short interview with Bishop Lilje, which convinced me that he is a Lutheran and will have



nothing to do confessionally with the Reformed. I do not know Dr. Dibelius, but I have heard that, while he wants to be a Lutheran, he has imbibed quite a bit of the Prussian Union . . . The election at Bethel indeed favored the Lutheran element." T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.43, F.9. Graebner is still doing his best to convince the synodical leadership of the confessional strength of the *Landeskirchen*. While Harms kindly receives these observations, his ear remains tilted toward Behnken and the Free Churches.

75. Meyer to Behnken, June 29, from the L. Meyer Collection at CHI, B.40, File—Behnken.

76. Arndt served as Chief of Religious Affairs of the Military Government.

77. Letter of Behnken to Meyer on June 21. Taken from the L. Meyer Collection at CHI, B.40, File—Behnken.

78. *Luther: Anbruch und Krise der Neuzeit* II. Auflage (Nürnberg: Latare, 1948). Citation here is from *Luther Now*, trans. Carl J. Schindler (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952). It is noteworthy that this book does not treat either the Marburg Colloquy or the Wittenberg Concord, both of which deal with matters of church fellowship.

79. Lilje, 131.

80. Lilje, 131.

81. AC VII, from the German in Tappert.

82. Lilje, 131.

83. Lilje, 129–130. To these words Lilje adds, "For this reason the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in Word and Sacrament is so essential." Unfortunately he does not tell us for whom it is essential. Certainly it was important for him and his fellow Lutherans, but one could not say that it had the same importance for the Reformed, who were willing to speak of the presence of Christ in every way except that of "bodily," that the crucified body of Christ is eaten in the Sacrament. The one other place where Lilje mentions the sacraments in this chapter is in discussion of Luther's opposition to "enthusiasm." Here he states that "Genuine faith which takes hold of God's revelation (that means Christ) is never the humanly evolved response to a religious 'postulate' but is always created by the 'eternal' Word and Sacrament" (134). That some churches denied these very means, however, does not seem to have prevented Lilje from seeking fellowship with them, because Christ could be present among them.

84. Lilje, 129.

85. Lilje, 129.

86. Apology VII, 5.

87. This is certainly not the import of the Augustana's use of *docent*.

88. Apology VII, 20.

89. *BSLK*, 238–239.

90. Apology VII, 2.

91. Lilje, 132.

92. Lilje, 144. This is a reference to the *Consensus Quinquasecularis* of George Calixtus, a seventeenth-century Protestant theologian who tried to reconcile Lutherans, Calvinists, and Roman Catholics and believed that the first five centuries in the history of the church were ones of great unity. This idea was popular in the Ecumenical Movement but has been shown to have little basis in history. See Rouse and Neill, 1: 805.

93. Lilje, 144.

94. Lilje, 144. Note well that the sacraments are absent here.

95. Translated from T. Graebner Collection at CHI, B.45, F.8. The German reads: "Niemals hat jemand, um einen mir besonders wichtigen Punkt noch herauszugreifen, bestritten, dass es in Deutschland ein Wiedererwachen lutherischer Theologie gegeben hat und gibt. Ich kan nicht oder nur sehr unbestimmt gewusst hat. Ich habe über die Geschichte dieses Aufsteigs in deutscher und englischer Sprache wiederholt geschrieben und darüber auch mit dem verewigten Dr. Fürbringer korrespondiert. Es scheint mir, sehr verehrter Herr Doktor, dass man in Amerika die Entwicklung der Theologie in Europa zu wenig verfolgt und sich zu schematische Vorstellungen davon gemacht hat. Das ist kein Vorwurf gegen Ihre Kirche, sondern nur die Feststellung eines Schicksals. Bei uns war es ja nicht anders. Die Überraschung über die Lebendigkeit der Missourisynode war bei den deutschen Theologen ebenso gross wie Ihre Überraschung über die Tatsache, dass der Liberalismus des beginnenden 20. Jahrhunderts bei uns überwunden ist."

96. Pfabe provides a helpful summary of Graebner's interests in "Protestantism" in chapter 5 of his dissertation. His conclusion can be misleading, however. In pages 210–217 he notes a changing attitude within Graebner's writings toward "Protestantism." But of all the various figures whom he describes as objects of Graebner's change, only one is Reformed—Visser't Hooft. All the others are Lutheran. This figures well with Graebner's correspondence. His change in attitude was directed toward other Lutherans, not general "Protestantism." If his evaluation of the WCC meeting at Amsterdam appears more positive than one would expect, it was because here, as in other places in Europe, he found evidence of the death of Liberalism. This was hailed as a victory for confessional Lutheranism and an opportunity to exercise Lutheran influence. Friendly overtures or references to other confessional traditions remained contingent upon their exhibition of the marks of the Church—pure Word and Sacraments.

## A CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

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

ISSUE	THEME	DEADLINE
Holy Trinity 1996	Robert Preus Memorial Issue	March 1, 1996
Reformation 1996	Theology of the Cross & Justification	May 1, 1996
Epiphany 1997	Anniversary Issue	—
Easter tide 1997	Marriage and Sexuality	August 1, 1996

Send all submissions to the appropriate editors and addresses as listed on the inside back cover. Please include IBM or Macintosh diskette with manuscript whenever possible. (Specify word processing program and version used.)

# Concerning Church Fellowship

## The Church of the Lutheran Confession

1961



### THE STATE OF THE CONTROVERSY

§1. ONE OF THE MOST PROMINENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE church history of the first half of the twentieth century was the “Ecumenical Movement.” Under the influence of this movement, a serious dissension arose among the Lutheran churches on the question of church fellowship. Using the “it is enough” of the Augsburg Confession (“to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies instituted by men, should be everywhere alike” AC VII), various groups have developed conflicting teachings as to the extent of agreement necessary for church fellowship. Some maintain that it is enough to agree that Jesus is the Lord. Others contend that this means we are to avoid as heterodox only such as teach falsely concerning the cardinal doctrines of salvation. Still others make a distinction between errorists who err in fundamental doctrines and such as err in non-fundamental doctrines, contending that it is an infringement on Christian liberty to demand unity also in the non-fundamental doctrines. Still others would make the Augsburg Confession the standard of unity to the exclusion of other symbols of the Lutheran Church, particularly the Formula of Concord. In opposition to these varying views as to the extensiveness of agreement necessary for true unity, some have maintained that full agreement on all doctrines revealed in Scripture is necessary for that true unity on which alone the exercise of church fellowship may be based.

§2. Among those groups which have insisted on full doctrinal agreement as a necessary requisite for church fellowship, there has arisen dissension concerning the intensiveness of separation required from those who hold to errors. Some have

taught that a limited amount of fellowship and cooperation is to be tolerated with certain false teachers and groups. Others maintain that all joint worship and religious work with such errorists is forbidden. Finally, among those who maintain that all manifestations of fellowship with errorists are forbidden, a dispute has arisen concerning the application of the term heterodox church to communions which had previously adhered to the true teachings of Scripture, but later departed from them. Some have taught that at least a limited fellowship is to be practiced as long as such erring groups do not blaspheme the Word of God and do not refuse to discuss the issues. Others teach that fellowship with such groups is forbidden when it becomes apparent after careful consideration that the error is actually being taught and defended.

### PURPOSE OF THIS CONFESSION

§3. Now since Satan has sown much confusion in these matters in the Lutheran churches in the past twenty years or more, it is our purpose to state and declare plainly, purely, and clearly our faith and confession concerning these various issues in thesis and antithesis, i.e., the true doctrine and its opposite, in order that the foundation of divine truth might be manifest in all points under discussion, and that all unlawful, doubtful, suspicious, and condemned doctrines, wherever they may be found or heard, might be exposed so that everyone may be faithfully warned against the errors, which are everywhere spread, and no one be misled in this matter by the reputation of any man. We have clearly declared ourselves to one another in these important matters of our faith, both for those now living and also for our posterity. To explain this controversy, and by God’s grace finally to settle it, we present to the Christian reader this our teaching in conformity with the Word of God. Hallowed be thy name!

*THIS DOCUMENT REPRESENTS the confession of a particular church body, the Church of the Lutheran Confession. The CLC was organized in 1961, chiefly by pastors and congregations who had withdrawn from the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The latter, it was believed, had not held to the of Synodical Conference’s position on confession of faith and church fellowship. This came at a time when the Synodical Conference was in turmoil. Within a short period of time, WELS and ELS did leave the conference, and by 1966, the Synodical Conference was dissolved. The breakup of the Synodical Conference revolved around many issues, but finally at stake was the doctrine of fellowship and church relations. We print this confessional statement here because we believe that it is the last and most thorough articulation available of the doctrine of church fellowship as it was confessed in the Synodical Conference.*

*This printing is abbreviated. Omitted are an introduction, which includes a sketch of the historical context, and an epitome.*

## I. STATEMENT OF TRUE DOCTRINE

### A. THE NEED FOR FULL AGREEMENT

#### The Scriptural Standard of Unity

§4. We believe that the unity of the church is real and actual. This is the unity of which Luther speaks in our Small Catechism when he says of the Holy Spirit that “he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.” Christians are united because each Christian is entirely a creation of the Spirit. Christians share the same nature from beginning to end. “For there is

no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:22–24). All Christians are God’s children on the basis of Christ’s redemption of the world and on the basis of the work of the Spirit who through baptism and the word appropriates this holiness to us: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). Through faith the Holy Spirit unites us with Jesus Christ, and we become part of his Body and united with every Christian, and Jesus’ prayer is fulfilled: “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (Jn 17:21). This unity of the Body of Christ, the church, is expressed by Paul in Romans 12:5, “We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” This unity is most beautifully expressed in Ephesians 4:4–6, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

§5. Christians according to the new man are perfectly joined together in the same mind. The Holy Spirit makes them children of God, and he makes them all the same. They are agreed on sin, its nature, its origin, its means, its fruits, etc. They are agreed on grace, its sufficiency, its means, its fruits, etc. There may be different degrees of understanding, differences in the intensity of the experience, yet as far as the essence is concerned all believers are perfectly agreed.

§6. As Christians are perfectly joined together in one mind by the Spirit, it follows that the Spirit moves them all that they all speak the same thing. Though the manner of speaking may vary, yet the truth spoken must be ever one and the same thing. The church exists for the purpose of glorifying God, and only with speaking the same thing is this result attained: “that ye may with one mind and with one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 15:6).

§7. Thus the church tolerates no division. The high standard of Scripture is clear. All members of the church are to speak the same thing in all matters of faith. This is stated by St. Paul in just so many words in 1 Corinthians 1:10, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment.”

### **This Speaking is Restricted to the Scriptures**

§8. We further believe and confess that this speaking of the church is restricted to the Word of God. In so far as we are members of the church we may speak, confess, and teach only the Word. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Pt 4:11). The church is to speak the same thing, and that thing is called by Peter “the oracles of God.” In so far as they are human beings, the members of the church have no wisdom, no truth. Their united message is the revelation sent down from heaven, God’s sayings. So testifies St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:12, “Now we

have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak.” That St. John considers himself a messenger of wisdom from heaven is brought out in 1 John 1:3: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.” Jesus promised these apostles his Spirit, who would insure that they taught his sayings exactly: “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (Jn 14:26). Thus the commission of the church is “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Mt 28:20).

§9. The church is at all times to follow the example of the first congregation, which “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42), and may be able to say with Paul, “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). That the church is absolutely limited to speaking the oracles of God is taught by Moses in Deuteronomy 4:2, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.”

### **The Scriptures Are Inerrant**

§10. That the Holy Scriptures are given by God to the church for the foundation of faith and are the sole source from which all doctrines proclaimed in the Christian church must be taken, presupposes also this teaching that the Holy Scriptures are divine revelation. We accordingly teach that the Holy Scriptures differ from all other books in the world in that they are the Word of God. They are the Word of God because the holy men of God who wrote the Scriptures wrote only that which the Holy Ghost communicated to them by inspiration. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (God-breathed), and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). And again, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pt 1:21). We teach also that the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is not a so-called theological deduction, but that it is taught by direct statements of the Scriptures, 2 Timothy 3:16; John 10:35: “and the Scriptures cannot be broken”; Romans 3:2: “unto them were committed the oracles of God”; 1 Corinthians 2:13: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10:35.

§11. We reject the doctrine which under the name of science has gained wide popularity in the church of our day that Holy Scripture is not in all its parts the Word of God, but in part the Word of God and in part the word of man and hence does, or at least might, contain error. We reject this erroneous doctrine as horrible and blasphemous, since it flatly contradicts Christ and his holy apostles, sets up men as judges over the Word of God, and thus overthrows the foundation of the Christian church and its faith. (The material in the two preceding paragraphs is taken from the *Brief Statement*, 1932.)

### The Scriptures Are Inviolable

§12. We further believe that this inerrant Scripture which is the sole authority for all doctrine in the church is inviolable. And it is this quality in particular which suffers at the hands of all who in these days desire latitude in matters of doctrine. We have already mentioned the passage in Deuteronomy 4:2 warning against any additions or subtractions from Scripture. To this must be added the curse of Revelation 22:18, “If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.” The warning is also contained in Proverbs 30:5 f., “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” God will tolerate no tampering with his Word, even in seemingly insignificant details, for even the individual jot and tittle must be respected as a part of the divine record, Matthew 5:18. And again, “the Scripture cannot be broken,” (Jn 10:35). Thus are we to tremble at the Word of God, and we believe that any changes, additions, or subtractions constitute a violation of the majesty and holiness of the eternal God, who in love descended to man with the truth.

### The Scriptures Are Clear

§13. Neither, do we believe, is there room for private interpretation of Scripture on the basis of any supposed ambiguity or unclarity in the divine revelation. The perspicuity or clarity of Scripture is beyond dispute. To say that the Bible is unclear is blasphemy, charging the Author of our Salvation with giving fallen man confused directions regarding his way to heaven. But we say and teach with all conviction that Holy Writ is clear and makes all doctrines and precepts laid down in the inspired Word freely accessible to every reader. The Bible makes this claim for itself. Psalm 119:105, 130: “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. . . . The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.” Psalm 19:8 speaks: “The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” Christ promises: “If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:31–32). Thus doctrines are not based on interpretation of Scripture, but on the Word itself. The church cannot make the Bible clearer by its interpretations, but can only lead men to the naked words of Scripture, so they will base their faith on these words alone. We believe that the many differences in the teaching of the churches are due only to man who, in his perversity, refuses to take his reason captive under the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5), desiring to be a master over Holy Scripture (1 Tim 1:7).

### All Aberrations Are Condemned

§14. We also believe, teach, and confess that all aberrations from Holy Scripture are condemned. For what is false may not be mixed with truth. In Jeremiah 23:28 the Lord speaks to the preachers: “He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.” The church is commissioned to speak only God’s Word in its purity, “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Paul admonishes Timothy to “hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me” (2 Tim 1:13). In his First Epistle to Timothy Paul obligates him to “charge some that they teach no other doc-

trine” (1 Tim 1:3). Of those who mix the truth with error, Paul tells the Galatians in the first chapter of that letter: “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:9). Jeremiah threatens all such with God’s wrath: “Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, he saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord” (Jer 23:31–32). For any person to change any teaching of the Holy, Holy, Holy God is a most grave offense against the majesty of God. When we see men dare to tamper with the Divine Record, not trembling at his Word, we can only shudder at what must inevitably be the consequence. We remember God’s wrath at the changing of his worship perpetrated by Aaron at Mt. Sinai, and say with the Psalmist: “Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law” (Ps 119:53).

§15. It would be a tempting of the Holy God even to make a distinction between small and great aberrations, for in all cases of false teaching there is, as far as man is concerned, a mutilating of the Godhead. Furthermore, the doctrines of the Bible are so closely interrelated that the denial of any one of them is a reflection of the false teacher’s attitude toward all revealed truth. So does Dr. Luther teach: “My dear sir, God’s word is God’s word, which will not permit men to find fault with it. He who makes God a liar and blasphemes him in one word, or says it is a small thing for him to be blasphemed and called a liar; he blasphemes the whole God and has little regard for all blasphemy of God” (St. Louis Ed. XX:775).

### B. SEPARATION FROM ALL WHO DEVIATE

§16. These are stern truths, indeed. But they are truths derived from Scripture and laid down there by God himself for the sake of protecting and preserving for us that perfect truth which is the sole source of faith, life, and salvation. This then is also the reason why Scripture so emphatically and bluntly demands that Christians separate themselves from all who deviate in their doctrinal position from the truth of God’s Word.

### A Summary of Our Belief

§17. For a brief summary of what we believe, teach, and confess in this point, we present the Christian reader first of all with this statement: “Since God ordained that his Word only, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian church, 1 Peter 4:11; John 8:31–32; 1 Timothy 6:3–4, all Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church bodies, Matthew 5:15, to have church fellowship only with orthodox church bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church bodies, to leave them, Romans 16:17. We repudiate unionism, that is, church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God’s command, as causing divisions in the church, Romans 16:17; 2 John 9, 10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Timothy 2:17–21 (*Brief Statement*, Art. 28).

### Two Kinds of Churches

§18. Now, as already has been established above, and as always has been taught by the fathers, we believe that there are two kinds



of visible church bodies, pure and impure, or orthodox and heterodox. We have clearly shown that God requires of us that we establish the teaching of his Word in its truth and purity without admixture of error of any kind. This then is a pure or orthodox church which adheres to the unadulterated doctrine of God's Word and administers the sacraments according to their divine institution. On the other hand, a church which contrary to the divine ordinance tolerates false doctrine in its midst or deviates from the divine institution in the administration of the sacraments is rightly called an impure or heterodox church. That there would be such church bodies is foretold in Scripture. St. Paul says to the elders of Ephesus, Acts 20:29–30: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." These men who will speak false doctrine will succeed in gaining a following. "There must be also heresies among you" (1 Cor 11:19).

§19. Though it is generally held today that there is an advantage in having great variety among churches and that we demand too much when we maintain that all Christians should have the same faith, we firmly believe that it is not a thing well pleasing to God that there are heterodox church bodies. They are not desired by God, but exist by his permission only. And thereby we do not deny that there are dear children of God in heterodox churches. Also in those bodies children are born unto him as long as in them his Word is still preached. But God does not want them to exist as heterodox church bodies. These churches have inscribed false doctrine on their banner and have established a separatistic body. God permits them to exist not because it is good or pleasing to him, nor that we have a free choice to belong to any kind of groups, but he says: "There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor 11:19). So also did Dr. Luther write: "When it happens that men become disagreed in doctrine, it has this effect, that it separates them and reveals who the true Christians are, namely, those who have the Word of God in all its purity and excellence" (St. Louis Ed. XVII, 1346:71).

### Christians Are to Test All Churches

§20. We further believe that all Christians are required by God to discriminate between false and true churches as well as teachers. We read in 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." And the Lord Jesus exhorts: "Beware of false prophets" (Mt 7:15). Obedience to God's command requires then that Christians distinguish between true and false prophets.

### ... And Act Accordingly

§21. We further believe, teach, and confess that Christians are required to have church fellowship only with orthodox church bodies. Having distinguished between heterodox and orthodox bodies, they are to act according to this knowledge. This is what God's Word declares in all passages which admonish Christians not to hear false prophets, but to flee from them. These warnings tell the Christian not to listen to the false prophets but rather to stay clear of the danger involved in their teachings—the "good words and fair speeches" by which they "deceive the hearts of the

simple" (Rom 16:18). 2 John 10 bluntly requires: "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." In 1 Timothy 6:3–5 St. Paul says: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."

§22. Nor should 2 Corinthians 6:14–18 be lightly dismissed: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

§23. Though a casual reading of this passage might cause one to think it is speaking of unbelievers and not false churches, we would point out that erring churches, insofar as they err, are also unbelieving. They are unbelieving with respect to a number of Bible passages. By their errors they have divided the church and oppose the truth. False teaching is unrighteousness, and there can be no fellowship with it. False doctrine is darkness and true revealed doctrine is the light in this world. They have no communion, nothing in common. All false doctrine is the work of Belial; when we fellowship with false teachers we make concord with Satan, the author of their errors. Scripture teaches that we should come out from among them, that is, from the adherents and teachers of error, and be separate.

§24. That this applies to all heterodox teachers and bodies is taught most clearly and explicitly in Romans 16:17. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses [a cause of stumbling, snare to one's faith] contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." In this text both elements are included, namely, the act of distinguishing and the action resulting therefrom. The brethren of Paul are carefully to fix their eye on those who deviate by teaching or adhering to false doctrine alongside of the true doctrine, and are to avoid them.

### The Confession Is the Basis

§25. From this passage it is clear that fellowship is to be based on one thing only, the doctrine which is proclaimed or confessed. It is right here where there is so much confusion sown by Satan. For he always inserts this thought, that since there are believers also in heterodox churches (which we have readily and happily admitted), Christians should not separate from such bodies, or should fellowship with them at least to a certain extent. Here it is necessary to distinguish between Christian brotherhood and Christian fellowship. The holy Christian church consists indeed of all believers in Jesus Christ, of all who have been begotten of the Father through

the Word of Truth and are members of his family. But since faith is invisible, these brethren are invisible, and we are assured of their existence only by the Word and promise of God. That is the brotherhood. Christian fellowship, on the other hand, is a fruit of this brotherhood—and an essential one. Since we belong together as brothers in Christ, we show this by joint worship, prayer, and work.

§26. Now the basis for this fellowship cannot be the same as that for the brotherhood, which is regeneration and true faith. Before we can fellowship we must recognize the brother, and recognition must have as its object something that can be seen. But faith cannot be seen. One cannot recognize a brother by his faith, and it is equally impossible to fellowship with him on that basis. Paul says in Romans 10:10, “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” And in 1 Corinthians 4:5 he makes the significant statement: “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.”

§27. We therefore believe and teach that Christian fellowship is based only on profession of faith, by word and deed. As John says in his First Epistle, 4:2–3, “Hereby know ye the spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.” Confession is the basis for Christian fellowship, for when a man’s confession is in accord with the “teachings which we have learned,” we can recognize him as a brother.

§28. We know, of course, that our fellowship is not identical with the spiritual brotherhood. Behind a good confession may lie a hypocrite. And on the other hand, we know that there are Christians also in those church bodies which confess error together with the truth. We cannot recognize hypocrites in an orthodox body, nor can we recognize the believers in a false church. Moreover, we do not separate ourselves from the children of God among the false sects, but from the sects as such. The sects separate these dear children of God from us. We believe that it is for the benefit of the true believers among the heterodox that we are to refuse fellowship to these churches. Thereby we are constantly reminding them that they are in the wrong place. Time and again people have thereby been led out from the false church into the true, where God wants them to be.

### **This Includes All Who Deviate**

§29. We further believe, teach, and confess that there are no exceptions to this precept to avoid all false teachers and their adherents. Any deviation from the truth is a violation of God’s honor and constitutes a grave threat to believers, who after all can be saved only by the Word of God. St. Paul tells the Galatians: “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Gal 5:9). Here Paul emphatically declares that errors, however small, are dangerous things to trifle with. The error into which the Galatians were falling was a false attitude over against circumcision, the assumption that by submitting to circumcision and observing the Sabbath and other ceremonies they could make their justification more secure. They stressed the gospel, they confessed redemption by Christ, but they wanted to supplement the gospel by some exercise of their own. Paul warns them against the far-reaching consequences of this “little” deviation from the truth revealed. Before long they will lose the gospel, and in principle they have denied it already.

§30. Another picture used by Paul to stress that every single deviation is to be avoided is found in 2 Timothy 2:17–19. Here he compares error to gangrene (canker). It is a pitiful thing to behold a strong healthy man in the prime of life who has had an extremity frozen to the point that gangrene sets in. Unless the affected part is removed, the gangrene will relentlessly pursue its course of eating and spreading. The specific error to which Paul refers was in regard to the doctrine of the resurrection. He adds that there is safety in one rule only: “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim 2:19). Those who confess the truth should separate from all error. How very important this is we see from the source of this quotation. For Paul has taken this expression from his history of the rebellion of Korah in the wilderness. The people were commanded to stand apart from the tents of Korah and his cohorts. We know how fatal it would have been to disobey! Every deviation is a rebellion against the majesty and authority of God.

### **Such Exclusivism Is Evangelical**

§31. Though such an exclusive attitude as we here confess is everywhere maligned and condemned as unevangelical, it is actually a principle which is in complete accord with the heart of the gospel. In fact, it is the gospel of universal salvation for all sinners which is at stake. God’s plan of salvation carried out in Christ indeed embraces all sinners. It is all-inclusive. He who would have all men to be saved has placed this life-giving message in the Bible (see 2 Cor 5:19 and Rom 5:18). Only these good tidings of God bring hope and comfort and peace to every sinner. On the other hand, every religious effort arising from the unregenerate heart of man will inevitably be just as legalistic as the elements of the world to which it is captive.

§32. It is man’s nature to suppress the truth in his unrighteousness. Ever since Eve first explored the possibility, every deviation from the divine truth, every addition or subtraction on the part of man has of necessity been an infringement on the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. False doctrine is always a threat to the very universality and completeness of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It is in the interest of the preservation of the Good News that God is so explicit in forbidding fellowship with error, no matter how minute or trivial it may seem to be. Here Paul is our great teacher. No one will deny that he believed in the all-inclusive nature of the gospel of Jesus. All his efforts were bent toward bringing this peace of God to every corner of the world. Yet it is Paul in particular who wages constant warfare against each and every effort of man to change, pervert, or mutilate that gospel. For when men change the Word of God, they are attacking Christ himself. Paul dreads the thought that his parishioners should be referred to a mutilated Christ for their source of “comfort.” What could be a greater tragedy for his posterity than to receive a gospel less comforting in any way, and less universal, than the beautiful original entrusted to him?

### **Wrong Exclusivism Rejected**

§33. It must be mentioned that there is a wrong exclusivism which does not stem from this all-inclusive gospel. Where pride in one’s self or in one’s particular groups is the motive for isolation, this is sinful and shows a grave lack of understanding of the

gospel. Such was the separation of the Pharisees—and they have many followers who by their exclusive policies glorify only men. Any separation in the church which is not made in the interest of God's glory and the glory of his gospel is to be condemned just as much as unionism, the fellowshiping of false teachers.

### Examples From Scripture

§34. It is also contended by our opponents that the God of love who wants us to dwell in love and unity with men would not ask us to separate from all who deviate in matters of doctrine. For the Christian who places everything pertaining to his salvation into the divine hand, this is indeed a spurious argument. Just as the same God who gave the promise to Abraham could also instruct the same Abraham to offer up the son of promise as a sacrifice, so it is the same God of love and unity who also instructs the Christian to “avoid,” “withdraw,” “come out from among them,” “reject the heretic,” “have no company with him.” And since the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth the Christian knows from the outset that there is never a day when he may relax his efforts and not be on guard against the intrusion of false prophets and their errors, as well as the intrusion of error in his own teaching.

§35. Scripture gives countless examples of this endless war which Satan wages against truth. To our warning we see how dreadfully successful he often was. Even in their holiness our first parents lost the truth because they listened to the voice of temptation after it was clear that the voice had deviated from the true word. From the first opposition altar of Cain to the activities of the Beast in Revelation we observe the never-ending efforts of Satan to infiltrate the ranks of those who are to proclaim only the Word of God.

§36. Moses teaches us in Genesis 6:1ff. that all flesh had to be destroyed because “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” This situation had come into being because of the mingling of the church with the world. It was the joining spirit at Babel (in the interest of strength and security) which after the Flood again threatened the gospel with extinction. This led to a most drastic display of the principle of separation when God found it necessary to remove Abram completely from his family and from all nations so that the gospel might be preserved until the fullness of the time. Though his children were blessed in every possible way by Jehovah, who delivered them from all their enemies and provided for their every need, yet God had to place them into the straitjacket of the law economy that they might be reminded in a hundred ways every day that they were his peculiar people with a particular destiny. Despite these drastic measures, the history of Israel is a sad story of oft-repeated compromises with error and syncretism, often leading to total apostasy.

§37. In connection with the worship of the Golden Calf at Sinai, we learn the relative position of our love toward God and that toward our fellow man. When his worship was changed (though they intended to be worshiping Jehovah) and God's anger waxed hot, then the Levites, in love for God and to uphold his honor, were bidden to take the sword to their brethren, of whom three thousand fell that day. Whenever the Word of God is attacked, his honor is involved. In connection with 2 Timothy 2, we mentioned above the rebellion of Korah. The incident forcefully

brings home the same thought of the impending wrath of a God whose honor has been violated when his instructions were disobeyed. The New Testament urgings to separate are indeed loving warnings to escape before we become involved in God's wrath.

§38. In Joshua 20 we find a revealing chapter on the subtle and persistent efforts of Satan to syncretize and unionize religion. In the last assembly of Israel that Joshua convened he appealed to the people to put away their idols and to give undivided hearts to God. He is speaking of their attitudes. Although they repeatedly insist that they are Jehovah worshipers, he continues to admonish and plead for purity of worship, and expresses the principle of separation succinctly: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

§39. Though under God's glorious guidance this principle of exclusivism for the gospel's sake gave to Israel full possession of the Holy Land and victory over all foes, nevertheless they soon became lax in this very matter, allowing some of the Canaanites to remain in the land. The apparent advantages of this compromise with God's explicit orders were dissipated by the formal announcement of God at Bochim (Jgs 2). Their humanistic tendencies brought endless trouble to them and their posterity, for now God would not drive out these Canaanites, but would permit them to remain as a snare and a trap to Israel. In the New Testament the consequence of tolerating errorists is still the same, namely, that they become thorns in our flesh and cause serious schisms, which God permits so that the church may be purged (1 Cor 11:19).

§40. We could adduce many more examples from Scripture illustrating that when men like Abraham stood quite alone—faithful to their God, building their own altars in defiance of all—there God's blessings came in bountiful measure. Contrariwise, when Israel allowed error and falsehood to be mingled with the priceless truth committed to them, it brought ruin and havoc. From the times of the Judges, Solomon, the divided kingdom, the period of restoration, the voice cries out from every page: “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.”

§41. Thus Scripture clearly teaches by precept and many examples that Christians are to separate from all false religion, from all false teachers, lest the honor of God be violated, his name profaned, and the possession of the gospel endangered for them and their children; lest, as St. John says, they become part-takers of their evil deeds.

### C. ALL MANIFESTATIONS OF FELLOWSHIP ARE INVOLVED

§42. We further believe, teach, and confess that when our Lord Jesus Christ forbids us to exercise church fellowship with those who deviate in their teachings from the Word of God, that thereby all manifestations of Christian fellowship are forbidden. Though this appears very obvious in the light of the strong Scriptural words—to beware of such people, to avoid them, to reject them, to withdraw from such—we are required to make this matter very clear. Satan is so anxious to have true churches fraternizing with the false, that he has even inserted this thought, that some fellowship should be permitted, even though full recognition may be impossible. Now in church language it has been customary to speak of pulpit, altar, and prayer fellowship. But we must be very careful in using these terms, that we do not thereby think there are three different fellowships, and that each is to be treated differently. There is one fel-

lowship, and these are three outstanding manifestations of that one glorious gift we enjoy.

§43. Christian fellowship is the outgrowth of our brotherhood which we have by virtue of our God-created faith in Jesus Christ. As brothers and sisters in Jesus, we are united in one family, and we express this unity by joining in worship and religious work. This fellowship is a great, glorious, living thing. It manifests itself in countless ways: in the gathering of the disciples on the evening of Easter, in their remaining together at Jerusalem while they were awaiting the fulfillment of the Father's promise, in the life of the Mother church as it is described in the last verses of Acts 2 and again in chapter 4, in the relation of the Mother church to the congregations which now began to spring up on every hand. It manifested itself most beautifully in the concern of the Greek churches for the famine-stricken brethren of Judea, which Paul was so careful to cultivate.

§44. Now all these manifestations of fellowship are based on their unity in the Word, "in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship." As long as they continued in his Word, then were they all disciples and could recognize each other as such. But when someone in his teaching departed from the Word, the basis for fellowship was removed. The people who adhere to false teaching are to be shunned and avoided. One can hardly fulfill that command of God by allowing some fellowship but not all. We believe there is one fellowship (*koinonia*), which manifests itself in many different ways. Where unity of the confessed faith, unity in the Word, is absent, we are forbidden to practice any fellowship.

§45. Though in this next point there is no disagreement (at least not of a general nature in the Lutheran churches), yet for the sake of complete clarity we re-emphasize that which has always been Lutheran teaching, namely, that our separation both from the world and from errorists and false churches does not involve a separation in purely secular matters. We are in the world, but not of the world. The separation of which Scripture speaks in the passages on church fellowship concerns religious associations with people, not cultural, economic, or civic relations. Here the Christian guards only against intimacy with people who are opposed to the truth, exercising his judgment and liberty with great care. On the other hand, it must be noted that when separation is required from such with whom Christians have been in intimate religious fellowship, even such associations as would ordinarily be within the bounds of Scripture may be wrong, because of the offense which might be given. Here the teachings of the Formula of Concord, Article X, concerning adiaphora (matters of Christian liberty) apply with full force.

#### D. SUSPENSION OF ESTABLISHED FELLOWSHIPS

§46. We further believe, teach, and confess that established fellowships or existing fellowships are to be terminated when it has been ascertained that a person or group through a false position is causing division and offenses in the church. (Note: The place of brotherly admonition in the mutual relations of Christian brethren is discussed later in this article [see §63, §65, and §72b]. It does not belong to the essence of the principles stated below.)

Among our Lutheran teachers who have held a firm and Scriptural position in regard to making no alliances with those who deviate in their teachings from the Word, there are some

who have shown the same humanistic weakness of the unionist when the matter occurred of separating from those with whom there has been fellowship of long standing.

§47. We must therefore maintain steadfastly that the only basis for fellowship is complete unity in the doctrine of Christ, and that when this unity is broken, there is no basis for fellowship. Toleration of error, partaking of another's evil deeds, worshiping with someone who profanes the name of God by his false doctrine—all these things are no less wicked because of some previous relationship. In Romans 16:17 St. Paul in no way limits his statement to those outside of the fellowship of the Christians at Rome. Their marking of an errorist would not only include but begin within the communion itself. In Matthew 7:15, where Jesus tells us to beware of false prophets, he stresses that they will come in sheep's clothing, that is, externally they will appear among the sheep. Paul tells the elders of Ephesus to be on the alert for those men who will arise "of your own selves" (Acts 20:30).

§48. Though we instruct with all longsuffering in doctrine such as through ignorance hold erroneous opinions and beliefs, this in no wise restricts or limits the avoiding of those who by their deviations "cause divisions and offenses" in the church. Those cannot be treated as "weak" brethren who are publicly teaching their erroneous opinions as God's truth. Nor does isolation of errorists from one's own communion in such cases indicate a lack of love. For we believe that to obey the Lord and avoid them is true love, and only by thus following God's injunction can we "preserve unity" and heal the breaches in the walls of Zion. Where error is tolerated it will grow. When it is isolated it is unable to propagate itself.

## II. REJECTION OF FALSE DOCTRINE

### A. LIMITING THE EXTENT OF THE APPLICATION

§49 Now we turn to a refutation of the various counter-arguments to this Scriptural presentation, and accordingly with heart and mouth we reject and condemn as false, erroneous, and misleading all teachings which are not in accordance with, but contrary and opposed to, the doctrine above presented.

#### 1. (Limited) to Non-Christian Bodies

§50. That the application of the principle of separation is limited to non-Christian bodies is quite generally held among the majority of Protestant sects, most of which are quite willing to form alliances and unions with all church bodies which are willing to say that Jesus is the Lord. Even some Lutheran bodies have joined in such world organizations, though these organizations are not willing to define what is meant even by that statement that Jesus is the Lord. As shown above, there is no Scriptural license for such mingling of truth with error, and it leads only to ever greater indifference to doctrine. It stems from lack of understanding of the work of the church, which is solely to administer the Office of the Keys, in Word and Sacrament.

#### 2. (Limited) to Those Who Deny Redemption

§51. Thinking that they are serving the cause of truth, many in our day have made a selection of doctrines which they say are



necessary for saving faith, and restrict the principle of separation to those who in some way deny the redemptive work of Christ. But actually they are serving the cause of unionism, namely, by their fellowship with those who err in any doctrine of Scripture. These people stress the fundamentals of evangelical truth, whence they are called Fundamentalists or Evangelicals, and permit differences of belief on all other points of Christian doctrine. We repudiate such groups as sinfully unionistic and condemn the aiding and supporting of such movements as involving a denial of Scriptural doctrines. Though it is true that these fundamentals of doctrine are usually quite Scriptural, and that he who believes these truths will be saved, the question of saving faith is not admissible in the matter of church fellowship, since such fellowship is based on confession and not on faith, which is invisible.

### *Refutation of Arguments*

#### *Argument from John 17*

§52. A favorite and supposedly unanswerable argument urged by protagonists of such church unions is that it is our Lord's own express will that there should be only one visible church. The proof of this is said to be the prayer: "That they all may be one" (Jn 17:21). But the unity for which Christ prayed was clearly not an external one. It was a spiritual unity, a unity of faith. This is the unity that was created among his disciples in the early church, and it is this unity which, with indissoluble bonds, still binds together in the holy Christian church all true believers, wherever they may be.

#### *Argument on "Strength"*

§53. We also refute as an insidious error the argument so frequently heard in these days, namely, that tolerance of other church bodies and a combining of efforts are necessary for the strengthening of the church. It is said that the churches must unite in order to meet the dangers of atheism, materialism, modernism, secularism, etc. We are told that a united church would be a more powerful force in combating the social ills which beset the nation.

§54. These proponents of union among churches reveal the false motivation behind such efforts. The power of the church of Christ lies in the gospel that she preaches. It is blasphemous to think that human numbers and human organization can add strength and effectiveness to God's Holy Word. It is rather the mingling of that gospel truth with error which weakens the church and impedes its attack on the stronghold of Satan. "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." His strength is made perfect in our weakness. He who gave victory to Gideon with but 300 men, and he who evangelized the world through a far smaller number, does not need large organizations to accomplish his purpose. But of course it is right here that the opponents go astray, for they have set goals for the church which God has not given us, such as combating social evils and improving the morality of the world and society.

#### *Argument on "National Interest"*

§55. Closely allied with this false argument is the plea that we should forget our doctrinal differences in the national interest. It is said by these people that we owe it to our nation to unite, not only (as shown above) to stem the tide of social ills such as juvenile

delinquency and organized crime which hurt the nation, but particularly to meet the common foes of all Christendom, Communism et al. The plea is that all Christian churches are in jeopardy and that our democracy is weakened by religious differences among its people.

§56. This is a vicious form of attack made from all sides against our dear Christians. It is bad enough that the world and its leaders and educators tie together our democracy and the Christian religion and constantly urge that for effective democracy we must give up our distinctive beliefs and exercise tolerance toward all other forms. But this is not surprising since the world cannot be expected to distinguish between the interest of the nation and of the churches. It is bad enough that the many Reformed denominations, following the principles of Calvin and other leaders, mingle the activities of the church with those of the state. But when Lutheran teachers would make the church the handmaiden of the state and speak as though this were our function as churches against the enemies of our nation, then we begin to realize how mightily Satan is raging against the pure doctrine in our churches.

§57. The church which earnestly upholds the truth brings down blessings on the nation. In so far as churches give up any part of the gospel, they bring down the wrath of God, also upon the nation. Again and again the prophets of Judah and Israel teach the horror of that logic which advocates toleration of error in the interest of "political expediency." Therefore it is a lie of the Evil One that we serve the national interest by being "more tolerant" of the religious views of our fellow citizens. As citizens let all Christians be taught to be patriotic and loyal, and to grant to others the religious freedom which they claim for themselves. As church members let them be taught that the church is not to be identified with any nation or form of government, neither are her interests to be tied to the interests of any nation, for "My Kingdom is not of this world." All who urge their false views on these grounds lower their church to the level of any earthly organization with earthly goals. Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20), and we believe that the church has one function and one function only: to preach the gospel.

### **3. (Limited) to those who Err in Fundamentals**

§58. Though there is a correct and proper distinction made between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines, we reject as false the teaching that we are required to separate from those churches only which err in the fundamental doctrines. These errorists contend: In non-fundamentals the theologians should have the liberty to propound differing views without laying themselves open to the charge of disturbing the unity of faith or breaking the ties of church fellowship. They say it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines.

§59. The distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines has its place, but that place is most certainly not in the question of what constitutes a sufficient basis for church fellowship. Theologians of the church have made this distinction in connection with saving faith. Of fundamental doctrines we speak in the sense that a denial or falsification of certain teachings of Scripture undermines the very foundation of saving faith. But non-fundamental doctrines are also Scripture doctrines, just as well as the ones called fundamental. They are all doctrines of faith, i.e.,

doctrines to be accepted in faith. Hence it is by no means a negligible matter when one adheres to erroneous views in non-fundamental doctrines. If adhered to despite ample information, errors in non-fundamental doctrines become open rebellion against God and his holy Word, and threaten to lead into perdition.

§60 We must not confound non-fundamental doctrines with theological problems, must not relegate them to the realm of open questions (questions which are not answered by the Word of God). But to say (when discussing the basis for church fellowship) that we neither need nor can attain agreement in non-fundamentals is to deny the clarity of Scripture, the inviolability of Scripture, and to grant equal status to error and truth as well as license to preach and teach unscriptural doctrines. The Bride of Christ is concerned about her purity in doctrine in all respects: “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor 11:2–3).

#### 4. Limitations in Connection with Established Fellowships

§61. We further reject the teaching that false teachers and churches are to be avoided only when they no longer listen to admonition. In those communions which agree with us that there must be unanimity in all doctrines of Scripture as a basis for fellowship, some teachers have arisen who have taught that an existing fellowship is not to be terminated as long as the errorist will discuss the issues involved and permit admonition to be addressed to them. Though this argument is presented in the sheep’s clothing of Christian love and patience, we must condemn it as unscriptural and unionistic. When errorists by their adherence to their errors “cause divisions and offenses” in the church, we are told by the Holy Ghost through the Apostle Paul in Romans 16:17 to avoid them. To say in the face of this clear instruction that we are to fellowship with such as have become manifest errorists, simply because we are still admonishing them, must be condemned as disobedience to God, as allowing false teachers to ravage the flock, as disregarding the concern expressed in the next verse of Romans 16 (lest “by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple”)—in short, as belittling the Word of God and the importance of all revealed teaching. It can only, as must all unionism, lead to indifference to doctrine and to insecurity for the Christian in matters of faith.

#### *Refutation of Arguments*

§62. Our opponents have contended that the passage from Scripture instructing the strong to bear the burdens of the weak must be taken into account in applying the passages on separation from false teachers. They refer, for example, to Galatians 6:1–2, where St. Paul admonishes the strong to restore a fallen brother in the spirit of meekness.

§63. Now let us state at the outset that we fully believe in dealing patiently and lovingly with weak brethren. In every congregation there are Christians who are strong and others who are weak. Each individual Christian is at times strong and at times weak. Certainly this is a prime reason why our Lord does not leave us alone, but sets the solitary into families, that we may serve one another in humility and love. There are members of

congregations who are also weak in doctrine. This may be due to immaturity, since they may be novices and need more instruction, or it may be due to ignorance. It may be that some leader has sown confusion in the ranks of a group. Thus the church is ever busy at this task of strengthening the weak in its midst, “teaching them to observe.” There are many, many Bible passages and Scriptural examples of this constant activity of the teaching, strengthening, edifying church. But we most assuredly object to this, that this teaching and admonishing function be of necessity carried into the process of separating from errorists.

§64. Essentially the two groups of passages are addressed to opposite situations. Teaching, admonishing, edifying, instructing—all these presuppose disciples, learners, hearers. These learners and hearers may frequently entertain strange notions and erroneous thoughts. That is why they come to be taught the Word of God. Here the question of separation is totally out of place. But when Scripture tells us to avoid, withdraw, reject, beware, it certainly is not speaking of people who sit at the feet of the true church to learn the way to heaven. It is quite clearly in each case referring to people who are in the role of teaching, or who assume that role over against the true preachers of the Word. They are false prophets, men who claim that their errors are the truth; they are causers of division, men who lead a segment of the church away from the truth; they are heretics, men who form a new party in connection with their deviations. Let us not fail to note in this connection that error is dangerous (beware!), and that God does not ask his children to risk their salvation on the altar of an admonition which is being carried on in an atmosphere of fellowship where he has prohibited fellowship.

§65. Then there is also the weakness of language. A person may not express himself as he intended the meaning, or others may read something into his words which is not there. We do therefore teach that any Christian ought to be very sure before he will raise the cry of “false teacher.” He will make careful inquiry and ascertain exactly what is being taught by the suspected speaker. This may require little or much time. In the case of a person or group with whom one has been in fellowship, it will by its nature involve an admonition, or several admonitions. But we emphatically teach that the admonishing per se and by itself is not an absolute must, a condition *sine qua non*, for the application of “avoid them.” As we have seen, there may be years of admonition before a person is revealed as causing divisions and offenses by his errors, or it could become clear at one meeting that the basis for fellowship has been removed by adherence to error. The argument that separation must be delayed as long as the errorist will listen to admonition does not take into account that he is not only listening, but he is teaching his error at the same time. The Devil is very happy to have this errorist listen to endless admonition, if this will enable him to continue to fellowship and address the entire church.

§66. The charge that they who call for separation do not have love is quite specious: for we are first to have love for Christ, who has been attacked by the errorist, and then we are to have love for all the sheep and lambs, who stand in mortal danger by reason of the teachings of this man or group. And surely, if we act in love for God and his word, such action will also be the most loving thing toward the errorist, as Paul indicates when also in 2 Thessalonians 3:14–15 he advocates that we cease exercising fellowship

with those who are disobedient to his words, that they may be ashamed. If the errorist would always suffer isolation from the church, he would be induced to give serious thought to his aberrations. But we believe and confess that we dare not be partakers of the evil deeds nor, by offering the hand of fellowship, appear in any way to be sanctioning the error. That is not what is meant by confessing God before men.

#### *Argument Concerning the Examples of Jesus*

§67. The ministry of Jesus Christ is cited by the opponents as an example of loving patience with errorists. It is said by some that since he did not break off outward fellowship with Israel, we should not break with a synod which aberrates from the word. The first fallacy in this argument is that a synod with a confessional position is made parallel to the nation of Israel with its worship that centered at the Temple in Jerusalem. Neither the Temple nor the synagogue had a confessional position as such, except that their worshipers represented God's people of the Old Testament, who possessed the Law and were waiting for the Messiah. The second fallacy lies in the interpretation that is thus put on the actions of Jesus. But let the Lord speak for himself—and we will not hear the words of the unionist of today: “And ye have not his Word abiding in you” (Jn 5:38). Does this sound as though Jesus ever gave the impression that he either approved or tolerated the Jewish errors? Jesus publicly proclaimed that these false teachers were not of God's family: “He that sent me is true, whom ye know not” (Jn 7:28). Is this perhaps a manifestation of fellowship? Or again, “Ye shall die in your sins” (Jn 8:21–24). “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees” (Mt 16:6–11).

§68. Whoever mentions the example of Jesus as an instance of fellowshiping with false teachers has lost sight of the fact that our Savior died on a cross at the hand of his fellowmen just because of his exclusivism and his refusal to sanction and tolerate any variations of doctrine or belief. We therefore refute and condemn as superficial and extreme sophistry this argumentation that would justify the fellowshiping of errorists on the basis of the example of Jesus.

#### *Argument from Ephesians 4*

§69. Quite a popular argument used by our adversaries is taken from Ephesians 4:1–7. We are to be zealous to preserve the unity! It is contended that to separate can hardly be evidence of a zeal to preserve the unity and union. It is true that to exclude oneself from a communion destroys the union. But it is not necessarily a breaking of the unity. For if an errorist has arisen and is causing divisions and offenses by his teaching, he bears the guilt of disrupting the unity. This division will grow on and on if unimpeded. The gangrenous member must be cut off. When we “apply” Romans 16:17 we are simply doing what God has advocated to heal the breach. The surgery may indeed be painful, but it is meant to halt the advance of the disease. Ephesians 4 in particular demonstrates that the unity is a unity of faith: one Lord, one baptism, etc.

#### *Argument from Matthew 18*

§70. We are also told that, in keeping with Jesus' instructions in Matthew 18:15–17 for making every effort to regain the man who has trespassed against us, patience should be exercised toward the

erring teachers. It should be clear that to avoid a false teacher and to look upon a man as a heathen and a publican are two entirely different things. The former is based on the danger inherent in the goods which are being peddled as truth. The latter is based on the evidence of an unrepentant heart. The false teacher may indeed, in individual cases, eventually prove himself to be an unrepentant sinner, one who is willfully blaspheming God's word against his better knowledge. In that case we would have to consider him as a heathen man and a publican. But to contend that until this is true he is to be allowed to have the status of a teacher in good standing in the church, this is utterly preposterous. He is to be avoided because he is dangerous (Rom 16:18). He is dangerous whether or not there is hope that he may still repent.

§71. Here we must be careful in our use of the word “persistent” in describing a false teacher. This word came into use in the church as an antonym of “inadvertent.” In this connection it has its place, as we have shown above, namely, that the Christian exercise great care before charging a person or groups with heresy, first determining charitably whether it was done unwittingly and inadvertently, or whether the speaker sticks to his error, which is persistence. To say that we must be positive that the errorist intends stubbornly to pursue his course despite all admonition requires an omniscience not granted to mortals. Yet it is mortals who are asked to withdraw from such as teach falsely.

§72. In the case of one who trespasses against me, my one concern—of which he should be assured—is the sinner and his forgiveness. In the case of false teachers, however, there is first the immediate concern for the honor of God and for the endangered lambs. This does not by any means preclude a sincere concern for the erring man's soul. The separating action taken in obedience to God is for the sake of his glory and the safety of souls entrusted to the church. Previously, concurrently, and subsequently, as the Christian has call and opportunity, he will of course try to correct the erring one. Even here there may have to be a stopping point, however, due to the hazard involved in dealing with one who is endangering our faith by mingling lies with the truth. Paul tells Titus to dismiss, reject a heretical one after the first and second admonition (Ti 3:10), which is an echo of the Savior's words: “Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they . . . turn again and rend you” (Mt 7:6).

§73. In an age noted for doctrinal indifference (for the cry of the day is “deeds, not creeds”) it is particularly damaging and harmful to urge the proposition that one should not terminate fellowship until the false teacher or false church refuses to listen to admonition, since it is characteristic of errorists and unionists, who breathe the very air of compromise, to be willing to lend an ear forever, so to speak, to what they term “another point of view.” Where latitude and academic freedom have been adopted as standards, the time may never come that “admonition” will not be allowed. Satan does not demand that truth be silenced; he is quite satisfied to have a partial voice in the matter, for well he knows that even a little lie, mingled with truth, destroys the truth.

#### **Summary**

§74. To sum up, we reject and condemn any limitations on the extent of the application of the scriptural injunctions to separate from false teachers and groups. All who deviate are to be avoided.

They are to be avoided when it is clear that they are causing divisions and offenses in the church. They are guilty of serving other interests (“their belly”—Rom 16:18) rather than Christ, and to fellowship with them is to be a partaker of their evil deeds, a partaker of their influence, a partaker of the judgment they are calling down upon themselves. Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God!

## B. LIMITING THE INTENSIVENESS OF THE APPLICATION

### 1. (Limited) to Joint Worship Services

§75. The people who promote this thought, that only joint worship services with errorists are forbidden, recognize that there are injunctions in the Word which prohibit fellowship with errorists. Allowance for joint religious work and activity nevertheless is made by restricting this principle to certain forms or manifestations of our fellowship with other Christians. Now as we said above, there are many, many diverse ways in which our fellowship manifests itself. In each we bear witness to each other and to all men that we are brothers and sisters in Christ, that we are agreed in the faith. When the sad fact emerges that we must mark someone as a false teacher, we avoid him, and thereby give evidence that we are not agreed. We testify to that erring person and to all men that we do not share his views, but consider them false and contrary to the Word and will of the most high God. It has become part of our confession, the witness that we bring to the truth, that we reject him and his error.

§76. We owe such a confession first of all to God, who wants us to make a true and honest confession to demonstrate our loyalty to him. We owe this confession to our brothers and sisters in the faith, so that they may be warned against the dangers involved in the errors being held and taught by that person. We owe this confession to the errorist himself, in order that he may not be receiving the false comfort from us that it is not a serious matter that he holds and teaches things which are contrary to the words of Jesus. In short, we are to confess the truth, and that involves rejecting the errors. If the Christian will keep this in mind, namely, that he is not only to believe in his heart but also to confess with his mouth, he will readily see that it is not material whether it be a worship service that is under consideration, or some other form of joint religious worship and work.

§77. To join with heterodox people or groups, as churches or as church people, in works of charity, in dedication services, in conducting a ministry among the armed forces, in producing educational and devotional literature, etc.—all this can by no stretch of the imagination be called “testifying” to them and to the world that they are false teachers. Coordination and cooperation with church groups having a different confession can hardly be described as avoiding, withdrawing, or coming out from among them and being separate. We repeat that especially in periods of indifference to doctrine and creeds and confessions, the faithful Christian is required to be very careful not to give the impression that he approves or tolerates the false position of the heterodox. When our people are told on every hand that the divisions in Christendom are not serious, that basically every church is good and that one religion is as good as the next, that all roads lead to heaven, and that the differences in teaching are only theological hair-splitting—what can they be expected to believe when

even orthodox teachers and leaders join with heterodox in religious seminars, address each other’s conventions, work together on joint committees for various religious projects, etc. The trumpet must not give an uncertain sound.

### 2. (Limited) to Prayer, but not Joint Prayer

§78. A distinction has been made between prayer fellowship and joint prayer. While it is granted that the general fellowship of prayer with heterodox bodies is out of the question, it is argued that under proper safe-guards a joint prayer on certain occasions would not be objectionable. This distinction is certainly not justified by any difference in the inherent quality or nature of the prayer that would be offered on such a special occasion. It is in either case an act of worship. Neither would it depend on the number of times this act of prayer is performed. Can the number of times, or the habitual performing of an act, affect its ethical nature? Can something be God-pleasing when done only occasionally, but become an offense to him when repeated regularly?

§79. The sole question is, of course, whether the premises that warrant such prayer are actually present. They are clearly defined in Scripture: “Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:19–20). The warning of Paul to the Romans (“to avoid”—Rom 16:17) would lose its point if it did not cover joint prayer. He makes no exceptions. The warning of St. John in his Second Epistle deserves to be taken to heart: “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 Jn 8–11). John is, of course, not appealing against ordinary civility in manners, but warning against a formal brotherly greeting, one that would carry spiritual implications. Arguing now from the lesser to the greater: if we are to deny a brotherly reception to a man because he is an adherent of false doctrine, what about arranging a joint prayer? If by a mere greeting we already become guilty of the errorist’s evil deeds, how then may we join him in prayer? And what would be the nature of such a prayer? Our prayer must needs be directed against his “evil deeds,” while we would seek a blessing upon them. This is sheer hypocrisy!

§80. We must reject and condemn this distinction between prayer fellowship and joint prayer as a device for allowing fellowship where fellowship has been forbidden. The proponents of this distinction found it necessary to state that the passages calling for separation (Rom 16:17; 2 Cor 6:14–18; Gal 1:6–9; 1 Tim 6:3–5; Ti 1:10–14; 3:10–11; Mt 7:15; 2 Jn 7–11) are entirely directed against reprobates, anti-Christian errorists, enemies of Christ, in short, infidels. This sweeping assertion they must make in order to justify their “occasional joint prayer.” Since they say of these passages that they are applicable to non-Christians only, they have removed all passages which prohibit fellowship with errorists. Thereby it is manifest that they are opening the door not only to joint prayer,



but to complete church fellowship with all those whom one cannot prove to be hardened and faithless enemies of Christ.

### 3. “Cooperation in Externals”

§81. With great subtlety unionism of many kinds has infiltrated the church under the guise of innocent phrases such as “cooperation in externals.” Though we would not say that it is impossible (especially in days of confessional vigor and honesty) for churches to cooperate in certain secular activities even though they are divided in doctrine, yet when this expression is used to allow working together with heterodox bodies in religious matters, then we condemn the expression as a cloak for sinful disobedience to the Word of God, and a procedure which confuses and offends the simple Christian.

### 4. Fellowship Without Complicity

§82. Many joint services, prayers, and activities are justified by the claim that the specific false teaching that is involved was nevertheless not brought into question at that particular occasion, and that a certain degree of fraternizing with the errorist involved neither complicity in nor approval of his error. The Christian reader will know from all that we have stated from Scripture that it is not only the error that is to be avoided, but likewise the people who propagate it who are to be isolated. We therefore condemn also this phrase as a sophistry which may lead people astray from God’s paths.

### 5. External Fellowship Without Heart Fellowship

§83. By this plea some teachers would allow for the continuation of external fellowship by stressing that our Lord wants our hearts to be pure and purged of error. The latter is of course very true. The prime consideration is that our faith be correct and that we keep the leaven of error from entering into our hearts. It is also true that the denouncing of error and errorists is in such a situation the paramount activity of a confessing Christian. But though these traits and Christian characteristics are essential and highly to be praised, they do not excuse the Christian from also separating externally and publicly from error and errorists. Many a fine confession is vitiated by keeping up the semblance of fellowship with the errorist whom one has rebuked, even though he does not change his ways.

§84. There have indeed been periods in the history of the church when publicly to dissent from the established teaching of a church body meant automatic suspension, loss of office, loss of property, and even life. Then surely, to speak and rebuke was synonymous with external separation. But to call such testimony of words an “avoiding” and “shunning,” when one knows that for lack of action one will continue to be considered an integral part of the organization in question, that is to be using identical words indeed, but with totally different meaning.

### 6. Protesting Fellowship

§85. The idea of “protesting fellowship” or “a state of confession” is advanced at this point. This is closely related to the preceding, and we refute the abuse of such relationships on the same grounds.

§86. This point has to do with the external membership one has in an organization. When error rears its ugly head in an orthodox communion, the Christian has the duty of raising his voice, taking the sword of the Spirit, and driving out the error. As long as a church body thus attacks error it remains an orthodox church. The orthodox character of a church is established not by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine which is actually taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and its publications. On the other hand, a church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline (Acts 20:30; 1 Tim 1:3; see the *Brief Statement*).


§87. Sometimes, however, the issue is in doubt, for it is not clear whether the error has taken such a firm hold that it has become the *doctrina publica* (public doctrine) of the groups, or whether it is being combated successfully and eradicated. During such a period of strife, and in order to make his confession clear, the Christian will be compelled publicly to disavow the various statements, actions, and policies which are not consistent with Scripture, before, however, breaking the organizational bond. He states thereby that he is still on the roster of this communion, but not in sympathy with all the teachings that have arisen within this communion.

§88. When, however, such a state of protesting fellowship is proclaimed, but business is carried on as usual with the individual continuing to treat the errorists as though they were still faithful teachers and hearers of the Word—exchanging pulpits, transferring members, intercommuning, and the like—then that use of the expression is to be condemned as a cloak for unionistic activity. Without the appropriate action it becomes mere lip-service. Once again, the simple are deceived into thinking that these matters are not serious, not clearly taught in Scripture, not divisive.

### Summary

§89. Finally, whatever other condemnable or erroneous opinions there may still be, over and above the foregoing, can easily be gathered and named from the preceding explanations. For we reject and condemn everything that is not in accordance with, but contrary and opposed to, the doctrine recorded above and thoroughly grounded in God’s Word.

### IN CONCLUSION

§90. We believe that Jesus is our only Savior and that only in his precious gospel do we find peace and joy and comfort and hope. With him we would ever be in fellowship. We yearn for the day when we shall experience the fullness of that fellowship and see him face to face. There, with the great cloud of witnesses that has gone before, we shall be in fellowship with all believers in him. All visible fellowships on earth shall pass away, and are as the grass which withereth. His word shall never pass away. Though we be separated from all human beings, but united with Christ and his word, we shall be rich in his fellowship, and through him, with the Father. Deliver us from evil! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! 

# COLLOQUIUM FRATRUM

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

Smalcald Articles III/IV



## DOYLE THEIMER: THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH

In the Eastertide 1995 issue, Burnell F. Eckardt Jr. begins his article “The Language of Faith” with a promising proposition: “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.” I heartily agree. But in spite of the author’s eloquent use of words, he seems to have overlooked much about the grammar, words, and logic of the language of faith.

In the course of Eckardt’s article it becomes apparent that when he says “the language of faith,” he means a reiteration of the Word of God as it is reflected in the traditional, historic liturgy, including the daily office. I would suggest that by making the leap directly from the Word of God to the liturgy, he has bypassed what truly lies at the heart of the matter, namely, the confession of Christ. An examination of how we may speak about the person, work, and glory of Christ, in conformity with Scripture, provides true instruction in the language of faith. This is the burden of Martin Chemnitz’s *The Two Natures of Christ* (all references below are to this work).

The prominence of words and their meaning is evident in Chemnitz’s work. He begins with a whole chapter devoted to the terminology of the ancient fathers and scholastics, and throughout he takes pains to develop a terminology that is consistent with Scripture and catholic tradition. He exercises such care because he is convinced that what the words are describing is real, and is of God. Finally, as he goes about sorting out the degrees of communion between the natures of Christ, it becomes clear that the three *genera* basically function as a typology of statements about Christ, statements that are differentiated by their inherent words, grammar, logic, and meaning. Chemnitz identified three degrees, or *genera*, of the communication of attributes as the *genus idiomaticum*, the *genus apotelesmaticum*, and the *genus maiestaticum*, which approximately correspond to statements about the person of Christ, the work of Christ, and the exaltation of the human nature in Christ.

The first of these is the most complicated, encompassing as it does the well-developed, highly technical system of terminology, distinctions, and rigorous rules of logic that the fathers and scholastics had developed (*Two Natures*, 29–36). A full explanation is impossible here. It is worth noting that Chemnitz, like the ancient fathers he was following, took pains to establish that these rules of speaking about Christ were in careful imitation of Scripture (*Two Natures*, 176, 197 ff.). More to the point, however,

is that these were rules about the language of faith, as the following quotation will show:

No one should get the idea that it is a mere idle subtlety to exercise care in speaking concerning the correct use of this doctrine, for we should be extremely anxious to speak correctly here so that we can more easily avoid falling into arguments over words (*logomachiai*) or hairsplitting (*leptologia*).

Furthermore, *these methods of careful and proper speaking will help us to hold and confess the correct faith concerning the one person and the two natures in Christ*. For since the two natures in Christ do not subsist separately or by themselves, and are not united by a conversion or confusion but hypostatically, with the difference of the natures and essential attributes kept intact, therefore we continue to use the mode of speaking which is accepted in the schools, and thus we speak of the person in concrete terms and indicate the difference in the natures by abstract ones. *In this way we keep our profession of faith correct even in our modes of speaking about it, and thus we can carefully preserve this faith* (*Two Natures*, 207, emphasis added).

Eckardt himself would do well to exercise a bit more care in speaking about this doctrine. When he states that “language itself is first of all a divine and not a human attribute,” he betrays his ignorance of the matters he discusses. “If a property (synonymous with attribute) becomes a common thing so that it is equally the quality of this and that nature, or if it is abolished, it ceases to be a property; and things that are distinguished by attributes will no longer be different things but will be declared either the same or equal. Therefore a property essential to the divine nature does not in all eternity become a property essential to the human nature or vice versa” (*Two Natures*, 34). When man was created, one of his first assignments was to exercise the gift of language—to name the animals. If language is common to both God and man, it cannot be used as a defining characteristic, or attribute, to differentiate the nature of one from the other. It would, however, be correct to assert that “to create” is a divine and not a human attribute.

What is truly troubling, however, is that there seems to be an increasing tendency falsely to pit divinity against humanity, as Eckardt does, especially when the discussion turns to worship practice. It seems to me that this tendency sometimes results in such a denigration of human nature that there is a danger of falling

into the error of Flacius, whose over-reaction against synergism led him to assert that sin is an essential attribute of human nature. This tendency ultimately contradicts the gospel of Jesus Christ. For the Son of God assumed, sanctified, and exalted humanity in himself. He redeemed humanity and all that belongs properly to it. This fact, that Christ works through both the human and divine natures, is the focus of what Chemnitz calls his second genus: “The definitions of the Council of Chalcedony teach that both natures in Christ perform in communication with one another (μετὰ κοινωνίας) what is proper to each of them” (*Two Natures*, 215). The third genus emphasizes the human nature in particular. Chemnitz observes that “there are some attributes by which the divine essence works with a certain power (*energeia*) outside itself with respect to created things . . . [which] can be understood, described, and distinguished by the secondary action. Such attributes are His justice, His goodness, His power, majesty, glory, wisdom, and life” (*Two Natures*, 307). Passages of Scripture demonstrate that certain attributes such as these, which are divine attributes, have been given to Christ in time. The point of the third genus is that they must have been given to Christ according to the human nature because it is impossible to add anything to the divine nature, and the divine nature would already possess them anyway (*Two Natures*, 259, 260). The human nature of Christ was thereby enriched through the course of time, and all who are baptized into Christ share in those riches. This is the gospel. Whereas Eckardt asserts that the first and essential step in learning the language of faith is to learn the liturgy, I am convinced that it is to learn Christology. The language of Christology is what informed the liturgy as it developed. And as the liturgy, the work of God for and in and through his people, continues to develop in this day and age, the language of orthodox Christology must be the standard by which it is deemed acceptable or not. Or, to cast it in terms of a current debate, a distinctively Lutheran Christology could provide the clear and consistent “substance” that might inform a variety of “styles.” For orthodox Christology has both a centripetal pull toward catholic tradition and a centrifugal push toward evangelistic outreach. The task is not so much to hold on to a Lutheran recension of the Western Rite at all costs, as many seem to imply, but to hold on to the Christ who holds us and to confess him clearly and boldly in this day and age with acclamations of praise and thanksgiving.

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### BURNELL F. ECKARDT JR. RESPONDS

Thanks to Rev. Theimer for his reply to my article. I am convinced that the language of faith is a matter that needs much more attention. Rev. Theimer has demonstrated that these matters are of great importance to him as well, and need greater discussion and study. In that respect we agree.

But he takes issue with my contention that speech is first of all divine. Perhaps it is because of the constraints of a latent Aristotelian way of thinking such as was not uncommon among the Scholastics that Rev. Theimer cannot get beyond his own definition of “attribute.” A divine attribute is one thing, a human another. To call speech a divine attribute is therefore, in his way of thinking, to blur the distinction between what is divine and what is

human, the Eutychian error. But must not attribute first be understood simply as something attributable? What of speech then? To whom is speech attributable first? The Second Person of the Trinity is called the *Logos*, and this ought to give Rev. Theimer pause, for if he is called *Logos*, and that precisely in reference to the beginning, then *logoi*, words, are attributable only to divinity in the beginning, for he was before the worlds began; he was already *Logos*. How then did man come to speak? As Rev. Theimer points out, it was a gift; for speech was in essence attributable directly and only to God, as the creation account shows. But Rev. Theimer, with Chemnitz’s *Two natures of Christ* in hand, must wonder how a divine attribute can be given to man except in the incarnation. Yet is not also dominion a divine attribute? Certainly only God is Lord! But he has given the gift of dominion also to man: man was given divine dominion over the animals, which dominion was first exercised when he spoke, giving them names, for whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. Far from pitting divinity against humanity, this drives at the essence of what humanity is, a creation in the image of God. Indeed, Christ is the image of God, and only in the incarnation is the fulfillment of man’s creation in the image of God. One might as well say that man was created in the image of Christ, for Christ is God; and thus in Adam we are given a type of the coming One.

Second, to suggest that “the confession of Christ” is supposed to lie between the Word of God and the liturgy may indicate a failure to understand all three. They are all the same thing: “for holy men of God spoke as they were moved,” etc. The Word of God did not drop down from heaven; it was given to apostles. When they preached or wrote it, it was not only God’s Word, but also at the same time their own confession, which they proclaimed and which the churches first heard in the Divine Service, that is, in liturgy. But from whence did the apostles receive it? How did they receive it? Now we get to the heart of the matter: the incarnate God, the divine *Logos* in the flesh, gave it to them, which is precisely the point of the declaration that the Word became flesh.

Moreover I fear that perhaps Rev. Theimer has missed the point of the *genus maiestaticum*. The communication of attributes of which Chemnitz speaks refers to the fullness of divine attributes that are communicated to the human nature all at once, from the very conception of Christ. That he grew in stature and knowledge is evidence of his humiliation in the flesh, and not of his incarnation itself, for it is not essential to flesh that it grow. The enrichment of the human nature of Christ “in time” and “through the course of time” was not due therefore to the communication of attributes, but to the humiliation of Christ.

Rev. Theimer would do well to reconsider his evident desire to use a “variety of styles” that would presumably enable his “centrifugal push toward evangelistic outreach,” for the chief controversy in our day arises out of a failure to see that even evangelistic outreach is first of all the business of Christ, the incarnate Word. Who are we to assume that we do well to use a variety of evangelism styles at all costs, as many imply? For it is written, “The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.”

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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

***The Other Song Book.*** Compiled by David Anderson. Phoenix, Arizona: Fellowship Publications, 1987.

■ The increasing use of *The Other Song Book* in many congregations requires a long, hard look at the “alternate” hymnal. Indeed, if this song book is going to be a tool used in worship, it ought to assist in the preaching of the cross. Otherwise, the church should set the book aside immediately and caution against its use. Regrettably, this hymnal is not subject to any controls or theological review before being used in a congregation, since it is not an “official” church hymnal. An undiscerning congregation looking for the newest gadget might begin to use *The Other Song Book* without seriously considering its suitability. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod does require in its constitution that Concordia Publishing House and the Synod’s Commission on Worship “advise and warn against the use of worship materials which are unworthy of use in the Christian worship of the Lutheran Church” (Bylaw 3.598c, 1989 *Handbook of the LCMS*). With increasing use of this new song book within the church, a critical analysis should be made of *The Other Song Book*. The Commission on Worship ought to examine the contents of this “hymnal” in the light of the theology of the cross, and if necessary “advise and warn against the use” of it. In the meantime, congregations will continue to implement the book as yet another “worship supplement” in a day when those who ought to know better are prone to accept such supplements uncritically. Thus the present review is offered as a brief critique. We will first discuss the Lutheran “theology of the cross” in contrast to the “theology of glory.” In this context, we will survey the lyrics of a sampling of songs from *The Other Song Book* to determine which theology is taught in the textual content of the book. Musical settings are not considered in this discussion. Finally, we will critique the brief liturgical section that follows the song collection.

### Theology of the Cross versus Theology of Glory

In Lutheran circles it is common to hear the theology of the cross invoked, but more difficult to sift through clichés and pin down meaning. The theology of the cross is not a narrow topic, but a comprehensive description of the church’s faith and existence on earth. This short discussion will hardly do justice to such a broad subject, but it will provide some basic parameters for measuring the content of *The Other Song Book*.

Since Luther himself is the man most responsible for a sharp definition of the theology of the cross, let us look to him for our description. In the *Heidelberg Theses* of May 1518, Luther made bold to use the theology of the cross as that which distinguishes “[t]hat person [who] does not deserve to be called a theologian” from one who does. Thesis 19 reads: “That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened” (AE 31: 40). For Luther, recognizing the invisible things of God, such attributes as virtue, godliness, wisdom, justice, and goodness, does not yet entitle anyone to the name “theologian” or make him worthy and wise before God. God’s method for making us worthy and wise is far different. Thesis 20 completes Luther’s distinction: “He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross” (AE 31: 40). It is precisely the easily despised, visible things of God—the incarnation with its *apparent* weakness and foolishness shown most clearly in the humility of suffering and the shame of the cross—that reveal the *true* glory that God wishes to reveal. Luther’s own example of one who was not yet this kind of “theologian” is seen by Philip’s earnest question to Jesus: “Show us the Father” (Jn 14:8). Christ sets aside Philip’s “flighty thought” that desires to find God somewhere other than in the person standing before him by answering, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” Jesus, as the theologian of the cross *par excellence*, is merely being true to type. According to the second half of Thesis 21, “A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is” (AE 31: 52–53). Jesus directs Philip, and all would-be theologians, not to a God manifest in glorious or spectacular deeds, but to himself, God hidden in suffering. Jesus speaks not of his bare, unimpressive appearance to men, but according to who he actually *is*: God become flesh.

In contrast to a theology of glory, which seeks to know God by his works in creation and in the works of men, the theology of the cross knows God in the sufferings of Christ and through the suffering of men for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Much is illumined by making this contrast, and thus we develop it more thoroughly as a means of precision.

The theology of glory strives to find God directly, without means. It teaches that man is able to know God in all his power, wisdom, and glory, in his naked and absolute majesty. It points to the revelation of God in nature or to the imagination of man, instead of to the special revelation of God in his Word and by the



holy sacraments. The theology of glory thus encourages the sinful ego of man to search for God through his own spiritual exercises. It misleads man to regard himself as someone with standing before God. In this way, Christ and his cross are stripped of their decisive importance, for the theology of glory focuses on man and his ability. It centers on the Christian, not the Christ; it elevates the worth and achievements of man, and not the cross. Thus it stresses the personal sincerity, commitment, decision, experience, and sacrifice *of man*.

Quite different is the theology of the cross. The theology of the cross looks for God only where he himself has promised to be found, even if it appears weak and foolish. While the theology of glory teaches that man can merit something before God, the theology of the cross humbly acknowledges that God has done everything for man. Even that which man appears to accomplish on his own is achieved by God working through him. Thus the theology of the cross destroys all self-righteousness, by pointing to the one who at great cost declares him righteous. It shows the strength and wisdom of man to be foolish and weak, while directing man to the apparent weakness of the crucified God.

Whether they recognize it or not, theologians of glory are enemies of the cross. They find their confidence in their persons, in their moral achievements and improvements, while they spurn the suffering and crosses that accompany the followers of Christ. The theology of the cross demands a new perception of what is real. It reveals that what is true in God often contradicts the appearance of truth in the observations and experience of man. The theology of the cross understands that the eyes and heart are unable to perceive what God is actually doing. Thus it often deals in paradox: the true God in swaddling clothes and hanging on a tree, and the unseen victory of the resurrection. True glory is found in the cross and in the suffering of Christians who cling to the promise of forgiveness. But even this promise is hidden from eyes that will not see. For God gives the promise through the modest means of common language, water, bread and wine. The theologian of the cross regards these ordinary means as the true reality of God, and he rejects any pretense of divinity that is conveyed apart from these humble vehicles. Here alone is where God confronts mankind with himself and with the forgiveness of sin. Thus all the truth of God is received by faith alone.

The theology of the cross does not depict the Christian life as a joyless and miserable journey. On the contrary, faith embraces real joy in the blessings of the crucified one. This joy of the cross, then, is the proper starting place for all hymnody in the church. Indeed, the church must capture *only* the theology of the cross and proclaim in her song what God has accomplished for man on that cross. Yet consider the introduction to *The Other Song Book*, in which the compiler cites another minister to communicate his rationale for this new collection:

Music prepares the heart for worship and commitment. Music is the greatest mood alternator of all, and unlocks the ministry of God in the untrespassed soil of a person's soul. People love singing. They love being moved even when there is not a song in their hearts.

Here the power of music is recognized, but the focus is on man and *his* act of worship, on *his* innate power to commit himself (presumably to God). The author describes music as that which alternates moods and opens the door for the Spirit of God, and not as the setting for a doctrinally correct text by which the Spirit does his work where and when it pleases him. The reference to "the untrespassed soil of a person's soul" is ambiguous at best and erroneous and misleading in any case.

In this rationale for the song book, where is Christ? Where is the cross? It is true that "man loves to be moved even where there is not a song in his heart." But apart from the message of Christ and his cross, music can only move man more deeply into himself.

Not surprisingly, the hymns included in *The Other Song Book* reflect the ambiguity and poor theology of the introduction. While not all of the songs are of equal quality and character, in general they convey a theology of glory. Their focus is on man and his action, at the expense of Christ and his cross.

### Critique of Songs

To be sure, *The Other Song Book* includes texts that are not false. For example, "For God so Loved the World" (#45) is drawn almost verbatim from John 1 and 3. "The Lord's Prayer" (#57) is also Scripture in a modern setting. Indeed, the book indicates that many of the songs are taken directly from some translation of Scripture. Yet even according to the scriptural index in the back of the book, only 110 out of 264 songs deal self-consciously with a specific text. Many of those rely upon heavily law-oriented passages of Scripture. Consider a "biblical" song like "This is My Commandment" (#233), which reiterates the command of Christ to love, trust, serve, and lay down our lives for one another. The song assumes the gospel and therefore has no gospel. It points only to the law of God and the need to fulfill it, with the implication that man is actually able to keep the law of God without Christ and the cross.

*The Other Song Book* does include Frederick H. Hedge's fine nineteenth-century version of "A Mighty Fortress" (#2). We may seem to be quibbling over details when we say we prefer a more literal rendering that describes God more comprehensively as he "Who helps us free from every need / That hath us now o'ertaken" (LW, 298) to Hedge's temperate "helper amid the mortal ills prevailing." In Hedge's translation, Luther's sharp description of a world full of devils wanting to devour/swallow (*verschlingen*) us loses its edge to modern ears, which are not as familiar with the perfectly proper but less menacing "devils [who] . . . threaten to undo us." Christians are emboldened against this evil host, not because they will not succeed against us on account of the man who fights for us, but because "God hath willed His truth to triumph through us." This translation is artistically permissible, but squeezes a lot out of Luther's *es soll uns doch gelingen*. Such are the creative challenges of any translator. In a less disputatious time this translation would still have much to commend it. But Hedge's less-rugged version presents not so much Luther's "God for us" as a God whose truth will triumph "through us." Perhaps such changes were the accidental by-product of a "modern" translation; but nevertheless, by the inclusion of this version, the sturdy proclamation of Luther's venerable original is not as strong.

Other songs consist of “trite ditties” whose danger lies in their mind-numbing ability to say little or nothing through a repetition of “godly” words. Songs like “I Am a ‘C’” (#156), “The B-I-B-L-E” (#56), “The Butterfly Song” (#24), “Heavenly Sunshine” (#17), “The Books of the Old Testament” (#18), and the “New Testament Song” (#147) are just a few examples. Whatever else these songs might accomplish, they neither confess nor proclaim the faith.

Most conspicuous in *The Other Song Book* is what the songs do *not* say. They seldom refer to the cross; when they do, it is more as information of a past event than proclamation. The cross is apparently regarded either as a presupposition or as altogether incidental to the message of the songs. Thus the theology of this song book stands in opposition to the cross, by claiming to be Christian without the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ as the atonement for sin. The book uses words like “blood” and “cross” and even “atonement,” but with little explanation to proclaim or confess by their use. The theme might best be stated as: “Christ died on the cross, so now what are you going to do about it?” The book invites man to finish an otherwise incomplete redemption. When sinful man is thus required to play even a minor part in his own redemption, the atonement has been lost.

A sampling of the first fifty songs reveals the underlying theology of *The Other Song Book*. It is not a theology of the cross. It requires the power and ability of man to complete his redemption. The main actor of these songs is indicated by a frequent use of first person pronouns: *me*, *we*, *us*, and *I*. While such usage is never wrong in itself, it becomes a problem when the real center of a song is *me* instead of *him*. While we are certainly created as emotional beings and subjectivity is not automatically out of place in sacred song, it is out of place when it is left to the singer to initiate faith and salvation. For example, in “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” (#33), the song invites God to action with the words: “Here’s my heart, O take and seal it.” In “Come to My Heart, Lord Jesus” (#35), the closing line in each of the first four stanzas claims, “There is room in my heart for thee.” “Father, I Adore You” (#40) invites the Christian to “lay his life before” each person of the Trinity. “Fill My Cup, Lord” (#43) requests the Savior to “fill my cup,” but only after “I lift it up.” The same song teaches a conditional salvation when it claims that “My blessed Lord will come and save you / If you kneel to Him and humbly pray” (*emphasis added*). The sorrowful tune “For those Tears I Died” (#46) does grant that Jesus “loosed my chains” to set the sinner free, but in the last stanza the singer takes some of the credit back with words that are soothingly synergistic:

Jesus, I give you my heart and my soul;  
I know now without God I’d never be whole.  
Savior, you opened all the right doors,  
And I thank you and praise you from earth’s humble shores.  
Take me, I’m yours.

In a similar fashion, “God calling yet! Shall I not hear?” (#50) expects an enemy of God—dead in his trespasses and sin—to make the impressive decision:

Ah, yield Him all; in Him confide:  
Where but with Him does peace abide?  
Break loose, let earthly bonds be riven,  
And let the spirit rise to heav’n!

God calling yet!—I cannot stay  
My heart I yield without delay:  
Vain world, farewell! From thee I part;  
The voice of God hath reached my heart!

Throughout these songs, the Christian is expected to yield to God, to break loose and rise to heaven without delay. Yet without a proclamation of the cross of Christ, what can he hope to find? Only an angry God! For if man is to be saved, then God must come to him to announce a salvation already accomplished for him. In God’s theology, man is always the passive receiver of grace. Yet the examples cited from *The Other Song Book* assault the theology of the cross and implicitly deny the sufficiency of the death of Christ. For these songs do not take sin seriously; they treat it merely as a moral blight or an occasional mistake. They encourage man to act on information about Jesus and to make it a reality in his own life. Thus the decision of man is put on par with the bitter suffering and death of God. As such, these are more than “bad” songs; they are false doctrine put to music.

The focus on man is a dramatic tendency throughout *The Other Song Book*, indicative of its theology of glory. In the “All Day Song” (#3), God is almost an afterthought to man, who is urged to

Love Him in the mornin’ when you see the sun arisin’,  
Love Him in the evenin’ cause He took you through the day.  
And in the in between time when you feel the pressure comin’,  
Remember that He loves you and He promises to stay.  
When you think you got to worry ’cause it seems the thing to do,  
Remember He ain’t in a hurry; He’s always got time for you.

The song calls for man to act: to love, to remember, to stop worrying. The cross is not mentioned; there seems to be no need for it. Man can presumably do *everything* on his own. (Perhaps the congregation should follow this song with a chorus from “Heavenly Father, I appreciate you” [#67], which might make God feel more needed.)

“Brighten the Corner Where You Are” (#22) exalts the wonderful works, not of Christ, but of the Christian:

Do not wait until some deed of greatness you may do,  
Do not wait to shed your light afar;  
To the many duties ever near you now be true.

Chorus: Brighten the corner where you are . . .  
Someone far from harbor you may guide across the bar,  
Brighten the corner where you are!

Just above are clouded skies that you may help to clear,  
Let not narrow self your way debar;  
Tho into one heart alone may fall your song of cheer, [Chorus]

Here for all your talent you may surely find a need,  
Here reflect the Bright and Morning Star;  
Even from your humble hand the bread of life may feed.  
[Chorus]

This song makes no attempt to explain the true role and place of Christian good works. It is nothing but a moralistic exhortation to “be good.” The “humble” person of stanza three sounds more like the Messiah than does Christ!

*The Other Song Book* expresses a theology of glory also in the denial that God works through means of word and sacrament. There is a clear lack of sacramental consciousness in this collection. The topical index lists only five songs for baptism and three for the Lord's Supper, including among these, "Let us break bread together on our knees" (#126), which contains the presumably insignificant typographical error in stanza 3: "Let us bow 'round the alter [*sic*]." The frequent references to being "born again" are never clearly associated with the new birth of Holy Baptism. Instead, the prevailing orthodoxy of the song book teaches with Zwingli that the Holy Spirit comes directly, without the need for any vehicle. For example, "Cleanse me" (#21) begs the Holy Ghost to "send a revival," to "start the work in me." But even this "start-up" depends on the willingness of the singer to "surrender." "Blessed assurance" (#16) brags of

Perfect submission, perfect delight;  
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;  
Angels descending from heaven above;  
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

This lofty description reinforces the notion of direct contact with the absolute God, while rejecting the God who washes away sins through water and the word, forgives by the absolution of the pastor, and gives his very body and blood in the Supper. The song claims to find God virtually everywhere except where he has put himself! Thus the so-called blessed assurance is a pious fraud, which only serves to rob man of the comfort found in the means of grace.

In the "Communion Song" (#34), meaning is stripped away by the purposely vague language:

Take this bread I give to you, And as you do remember me.  
This bread is my body broken just for you, Take it, eat it:  
Each time you do, remember me.

Take this cup I fill for you, And as you do remember me.  
This cup is the new covenant I'm making with you,  
Take it, Drink it:  
Each time you do, remember me.

There is a shallowness in these words that makes no attempt to capture either the life-giving benefits or the mystery of the real presence. Instead, these words are ambiguous enough to please almost anyone—anyone, that is, without a well-formed understanding of the Lord's Supper; those who do understand the sacrament find little to embrace. The testament of Christ is described as a "covenant" that God makes *with* man instead of what he enacts and gives *to* man. The song describes an event that never gets past being a simple memorial meal. For a theology of glory, bread and wine are far too mundane to convey the forgiveness of sins, much less the body and blood of Christ.

### Critique of Worship Orders

The liturgical section of *The Other Song Book* contains five brief Worship Orders (WO). Handt Hanson revised these for the 1992 edition of the book. There are two orders for Holy Communion and three for services without the sacrament. We are struck at first by the absence of an invocation or the placing of God's name

on the people he has gathered. Not only is the baptismal significance of the name thereby put aside, but so is the confession that where God causes his name to dwell there he is present to bless (2 Chr 6:17–21). A "Confession of Sins" is a staple part of each worship order, but instead of the individual Christian confessing original and actual sin that separates him from God and deserves punishment now and forever, the congregation uses the first person plural to speak together of a collective guilt that focuses on different perspectives of sin each time they gather. An amorphous "we" depersonalizes the confession and asks for help for the group's sinful condition, which is variously described as pain presumably caused by sin (WO #1), shortcomings (WO #1 and #5), a lack of faith (WO #2), or falling short of the goal or mark of true obedience by not loving or giving as we ought (WO #2 and #5). Though speaking of a "sinful condition" (WO #2 and #4), the confessions do not give the idea that we are by nature sinful and unclean, but only that we have problems (WO #1), lack strength (WO #2), are unable to do that which we desire (WO #3), all the while knowing that "we desire something better than what we have and what we are" (WO #4). There is a plea for forgiveness (WO #2–#5), but from the various confessions our sinful situation is not defined as all that terrible. Indeed, the day we use WO #4, we admit that we "know ourselves too well" and are able to discern our errors well enough to "see our human frailty." This gives undue credit to poor, miserable sinners.

The "Absolution" or "Good News" that follows each confession is never more than a declaration of grace. The voice of Christ announcing his forgiveness through his office is missing altogether. Presumably any "worship leader" could speak this part. In addition, each order of worship places the Bride of Christ in the awkward position of having to "forgive" herself. She is to receive comfort not by hearing the voice of Christ, but by speaking back to herself in first person plurals. There is no comforting "I forgive you all of your sins" in the stead and by the command of Christ. There is only the church gazing into the mirror, assuring herself with statements like "Our God is a great God. . . . Our response to God's love is the focus for our lives. . . . We are forgiven" (WO #3). Consistent with this disavowal and misunderstanding of Christ's ministry among his people through his office are the words "We are ministers to each other" (WO #3), which can only add to the church's confusion. The individual conscience-stricken sinner will find neither the incarnate Christ nor the comfort of his absolution in these rambling and misleading pronouncements.

While WO #4 allows for the speaking of the Apostles' Creed and WO #5 uses the Nicene, the home-made "Affirmations of Faith" in WO #1–3 are poor substitutes for a creed. They hold the worshiper captive to the personal musings of the creed-writer and cut him off from the history of the universal church and the norms of faith that were hammered out by the confessing church doing battle against the personal musings of false teachers. WO #1 offers a lean creed that omits the conception by the Holy Spirit, the virgin birth, and the reference to Christ's suffering in history under Pontius Pilate. May we ask why these are missing? And what of the resurrection of the body? Is *this* faith purposely intending to be different than *the* faith? Are we to understand that this is a *different* faith by that which is *not* confessed? And how

can such a personal creed have anything but a divisive effect on the church when it substitutes individual piety for the body of truth held by believers everywhere on the basis of God's Word?

The Communion liturgies in *WO* #3 and #5 are stripped of everything except novelty. *WO* #3 begins with an invitation to celebrate complete with an exclamation point so that the Leader knows what to emphasize in his or her reading. The words of institution are divided into two separate parts ("The Words of Institution for the Bread" followed by "The Words of Institution for the Wine"), read verbatim from St. Matthew. *WO* #5 takes license in another direction by placing the leader and people in a words-of-institution dialogue that further confuses the role of Christ's office for the sake of innovation. Is there a theological purpose to moving the Lord's Prayer after the *verba*? Luther's *Formula Missae* arranged it thus, although most church orders followed the order in his *Deutsche Messe*, which placed the prayer of Christ before the words of Christ. Certainly Hanson's order is not meant to signify that the Lord's Prayer somehow completes the consecration, but is it out of place to ask if there is a reason for the change? Or is it simply change for change's sake?

What will the congregation learn from this? We cannot help but recall the discussion of the mass in AC XXIV, 2–3: "Meanwhile no conspicuous changes have been made in the public ceremonies of the Mass, except that in certain places German hymns are sung in addition to the Latin responses for the instruction and exercise of the people. *After all, the chief purpose of the ceremonies is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ*" (*emphasis added*). If this is still the purpose of liturgical orders within Lutheran churches, then what are the orders in *The Other Song Book* teaching about Christ and the cross? Such questions should not be afterthoughts, but ought to frame the discussion from the start.

A final observation about these orders of worship lies in something else that is absent. The concept of heavenly worship is forfeit. Where are the heavenly hymns, the songs of the angels with whom we join our voices when God gathers us around his means of grace? Where is the Gloria in Excelsis of the Christmas angels, who still celebrate and marvel at the peace on earth brought by the incarnation? Where is the Sanctus of the seraphim, who continually declare the holiness of the God who is still delivering his people by the same blood that Jesus offers his Father in payment for our sin? Let us be careful that we do not surrender the reality of "angels, archangels and all the company of heaven" who surround the throne of our present yet hidden Lord. This is the reality of the Divine Service—God's service to *us*. Luther's reminder is always timely: Only when we "call a thing what it actually is" and recognize our gracious God in the crucified Christ are we true theologians.

### Conclusion

A great many of the songs included in *The Other Song Book* alternate between a lack of content altogether and a tribute to the abilities and works of man. The five worship orders at the conclusion of the book evidence a similar leaning. The triviality of this song book would be amusing if not for its use by an increasing number of congregations. But where the songs are not trite, repetitive, or inane, many are false preachment. Some selections combine these

characteristics. The theology of glory calls out alluringly with its man-exalting premise. A Christian should not sing (#242),

Accept him with your whole heart,  
And use your own two hands;  
With one reach out to Jesus,  
And with the other bring a friend.

when he has come as a "beggar, that is true," to receive everything from the service of God. And a Christian should not affirm, "I believe that the community of believers called the church can experience the fullness of life through the word, the sacraments, *and all that we do*" ("Affirmation of Faith," *WO* #3, *emphasis added*). Synergistic verbiage has no place in Christian—much less Lutheran—worship. If the church wishes to confess that God is the one who alone gives good gifts to his church through word, water, and supper, she will use another song book.

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**Reformed Reader: A Sourcebook in Christian Theology.** Edited by George Stroup. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993. 368 pages.

■ This second volume of excerpts from primary sources has an interesting extension of its subtitle: "Volume II: Contemporary Trajectories; 1799–Present." Compare that to its predecessor: "Volume I: Classical Beginnings; 1519–1799," and one gains insight into what volume II makes clear—the classical Reformed tradition has exploded like a skyrocket, throwing off spiraling theologies in all directions, along "contemporary trajectories."

Consequently, there is a certain "potpourri" flavor to this book. It is heavily weighted toward Berkhof, Barth, and Moltmann, but demonstrates by the inclusion of the likes of Jan Lochmann, Letty Russell, and Jacques Ellul that the Reformed tradition in our age is anything but monochromatic. For those whose acquaintance with Reformed writers extends only to that provided by Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*, this volume will provide a much-needed introduction to the very different Reformed theologians of this age.

Shirley Guthrie gives a straightforward Reformed view of election: "If we interpret our election in the light of Christ, we will know that it means not only a gift but a command, not only life passively received from God but life actively lived in obedience to God. God chooses us not so we can sit around and enjoy our election, but get to work" (90). On the other hand, John Leith will surprise those who think they know what every Reformed thinker thinks about sanctification: "To boast about sanctification is to lose it. Hence there is a wholesome reticence about being holy" (203). This is a change; too much modesty about one's sanctification once upon a time in Geneva could get one a day or two in the stocks.

Likewise, Barth's denigration of faith in the blinding light of grace is familiar:

There is always something wrong and misleading when the faith of a man is referred to as his way of salvation in



contrast to his way in wicked works, or his true way of salvation in contrast to his way in the supposed good works of false faith and superstition. . . . There is as little praise of man on the basis of his faith as on that of his works (194).

Not so “classical,” however, is Letty Russell’s reading of St. Paul:

The use of the metaphor of marriage in Eph. 5:21–33 to illuminate the relationship of Christ and the church continues the Old Testament understanding of marriage as a sign of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. . . . However, in its usage in church tradition this text has served to reinforce the model of subjection of the wives (church) to their husbands (Christ). The result is that women are tied to the structures of fallen creation through sexist attitudes, and marriage is often unable to represent a true metaphor of deep mutuality. . . . The circumstances of Paul’s time and his expectation of the *Parousia* never provided occasion for Paul to work out fully and consistently his teaching in regard to slave and free, male and female. Nor did they provide occasions for our particular questions of today such as: Does a ‘secular’ person have to become ‘religious’ in order to share in church life; or an African become ‘European’ before being a Christian; or a homosexual become ‘heterosexual’ before being accepted by Christ? (222–23).

So what is the state of Reformed theology in the present day? Variegated, certainly—and increasingly so. The value of this book for the Lutheran pastor is its demonstration that the preaching and teaching in the Reformed-tradition churches down the street likely no longer derive primarily from the thought of Calvin and Knox, just as in many Lutheran parishes the thought of Luther and Chemnitz has been retired from the lists. George Stroup helps those of us who need an update on Reformed theology to clear our eyes and see clearly what lies about us as we seek to make confessional Lutheranism understandable to the modern, rather than the medieval, mind.

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***After Christendom? How the Church Is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas.*** By Stanley Hauerwas. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991. 189 pages. Paper.

■ The title of this book raises a provocative question, *After Christendom?* The subtitle, *How the Church Is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas*, attempts to deal with the issues relating to the question. Stanley Hauerwas, a Methodist who teaches theological ethics at the Duke Divinity School, asks the church to give up the presumptions of Constantinian power (associated with the notion of Christendom), especially when those presumptions take the form of what he calls “liberal universalism.” He calls the church to return to being a real

place of refuge, which provides the forgiveness of sins, and a real source of peace, which offers reconciliation, even to enemies.

Hauerwas begins by contending that the church must reshape its understanding of salvation, which can only happen within the community that is the church. Beliefs only make sense when they are embodied in the church. He accuses the church of retreating in the face of the advance of secular knowledge. To Hauerwas, this is evident in his observation that, even though the majority of people claim to believe in God, their actions and attitudes are not obvious indicators that there is a God. Hauerwas believes that today the church has only an incidental part in God’s story because it has accommodated itself to the world. To remedy that, the church must return to the pre-Constantinian view, which saw the world as inhospitable—when the minority church felt itself in a precarious position, on the verge of extinction, when it took faith to say God was in control of history.

For Hauerwas, salvation means to return all creation to the lordship of Christ. He cites Augustine, who took the position that the church is the only true society because the church directs us to worship the one true God. This assertion puts the church at odds with the positions of liberalism, which denies both death and sacrifice. The church should deny the notion that the only way to survive in this world is to accept the world’s terms. Again citing Augustine, Hauerwas states that genuine politics is not about power, but what he calls “the art of dying”—which he thinks should be the basis for the church’s activity in the world.

Hauerwas attacks the notion that justice is central to Christianity. In fact, he argues that justice can be a bad idea. Too often, justice is merely associated with rights, a concept inherited from the Enlightenment. Talk of justice usually means power—power to do good, but power nonetheless. Whenever Christians make justice a priority, they allow themselves to get caught up in the presuppositions of liberal societies, and, in that process, they forget how they are to regard and behave toward one other. Christians are called to hold God, not justice, before society. Christians are called to challenge any and all notions that any larger social unit can determine what is justice.

Hauerwas is not convinced that freedom of religion has been good for the church or society in America. In such a climate, convictions become what is functional rather than what is true. Convictions, in the name of tolerance, are relegated to the private sphere. In this environment, it is difficult to determine the church’s place. If anything, the church has been tamed. No truth can be called absolute because that would lead to intolerance toward those who do not accept it as truth. Everything has been relativised, which has led to what Richard John Neuhaus has called the “naked public square,” where religion has no place in moral or any other kind of deliberation. Hauerwas observes that only a domesticated religion is safe to be free in America. This domesticated religion results in only personal beliefs that, in turn, have an indirect relationship to the state. He believes that the church needs to make clear that its loyalty is to God and its freedom is derived from God, a stance that involves great risk because it would be perceived as a threat to the state’s freedom.

Hauerwas describes chapter 4, “The Politics of the Church: How We Lay Bricks and Make Disciples,” as the central chapter of the book. I personally found this chapter most stimulating and

thought-provoking. He raises a serious question: Can the church be both a caring and disciplined community at the same time? This is a great challenge because in the consumer-oriented market discipline is almost impossible to maintain. Churches are very good at providing services to people having crises in their personal lives or to people's perceived needs, but this only further demonstrates that religion has become privatized and reduced in theological content. In this climate, the pastoral office is defined by delivering pastoral services instead of liturgical leadership and moral authority. Hauerwas fears that, given the self-understanding definitions of care that predominate, the church cannot be a disciplined community and salvation (if that is still the hope of many people) will only be seen in individual terms.

But the church requires discipline, and its people need to be taught, in Hauerwas's terms, to "lay bricks." He employs the language of learning a craft to make his point. Those who have acquired the knowledge and exemplify the best standards are granted authority; they, in turn, train others and direct them to move ahead, always using what can be learned from the tradition. Christians need to learn to be disciples. Hauerwas makes this point: "We are not Christians because of what we believe, but because we have been called to be disciples of Jesus. To become a disciple is not a matter of a new or changed self-understanding, but rather to become part of a different community with a different set of practices." This involves the discipline of prayer and humility, and through such discipline we discover that we cannot do other than believe in God. Worship is central to being a Christian, and our worship is our morality; worship is our being grafted into the story of God, and in worship we discover that we are sinners. Hauerwas's final point is that we cannot learn we are sinners unless we are forced to confess our sins to other people in the church and seek reconciliation. These critical elements make the church what it is, and without them there is no church.

Hauerwas has additional chapters that deal with issues of sex, marriage, and education. For him, the issue is what kind of people we ought to be, which for Christians is the proper activity of the church, not the state. Marriage is based on the admonitions to Christians to love one another. Marriage helps to preserve the community because it is grounded in faithfulness toward another. Hauerwas does not see the family as an end in itself. Our true home is the church. We live by hope, not biology.

Hauerwas feels that our educational institutions have taken our stories and made them objective and true. He contends that the public schools in the United States have told our nation's story as a story of unity. This story has taken the form of a moral exercise and thus assumed objectivity. Religion has, in the name of neutrality, been absent in the curriculum of schools. This neutrality attempts to suppress conflict in the name of peace, the result being that convictions have been reduced to matters of opinion. But God is not merely a matter of public truth. Hauerwas fears that because religious challenges to this neutrality have been left to fundamentalists, there is the impression that other religious groups fail to question the legitimacy and validity of the stories passed on by the powers that be. The church needs to care about matters of truth and morality, but it cannot allow these things to be reduced to power or relativism. Hauerwas strongly believes that we still do battle with principalities and powers that stand in con-

flict with the message of salvation in Christ. In the face of such realities the church must educate its people in the gospel in such a way that those principalities and powers can be named. In the many challenges it encounters, the church cannot become an isolated ghetto; it must be public in its proclamation. It can never retreat from its faith that Jesus Christ rules every area of human life. Even though it must accept plurality as a fact in American life, it can never accept the idea that there is no public revelation that is not available to the whole world. The church must be courageous and public in what it is called to stand for.

I have two criticisms of Hauerwas's work. Often I found the development of his arguments to be laborious and complex. He makes very good points, but he often takes too much time in getting to them, and they are often not as clear as they could be. Another observation (and this is more important) is that his emphasis on eschatology is incomplete. Throughout the book the message is that the church is not an end in itself—that there is more than this life and this world. Christians are described as being not of this world. Salvation is a return of the creation to the lordship of Christ. But there is no strong affirmation of the resurrection of the dead—the ultimate and final reality of salvation. This is the heart of the church's hope, the hope that gives meaning to the life and death of every believer. Without the resurrection of the dead the church has no reason to exist, and there is no hope. Hauerwas could have been much more straightforward on this point.

Nevertheless, this is an important and provocative book. Hauerwas takes seriously the church as a called community of disciples of Christ. He also knows that those disciples are sojourners in this world—in the world, not of it. That was reality for early Christians, but that changed with the Constantinian era and the emergence of what has become known as Christendom. Then came the American solution to the church-state question, which, in effect, neutralized the role of any religion and relegated religion to the realm of the private. Hauerwas's proposals call the church to a renewed realization of and commitment to its own identity. The church is called to be a disciplined community, to witness to its Lord, to tell the truth, and be willing to engage and name the principalities and powers of this world. In the face of the decline or even death of Christendom, the church is challenged to be what it is really called to be. Hauerwas offers his proposals (and serious ones they are) in hopes that Christ's called and gathered disciples will be up to that challenge. His proposals deserve attention.

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***The Fabricated Luther: The Rise and Fall of the Shirer Myth.*** By Uwe Siemon-Netto. St. Louis: CPH, 1995. 190 pages. Paper.

■ William Shirer did not create the myth that blamed Luther for the coming of Hitler. As Siemon-Netto clearly demonstrates, he perpetuated and popularized it. Shirer, an American war correspondent in Berlin during the early Nazi years, blasted the Germans in his bestseller *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* by asserting that "it is difficult to understand the behavior of most

German Protestants in the first Nazi years unless one is aware of two things: their history and the influence of Martin Luther” (William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* [New York: Fawcett World Library, 1962], 326).

In Shirer’s analysis, Luther’s “passion for political autocracy insured a mindless and provincial absolutism which reduced the vast majority of the German people to poverty, to a horrible torpor and a demeaning subservience” (Shirer, 134–135), and this attitude perpetuated itself into the twentieth century. The resulting cliché is that Luther taught his people absolute and unquestioning submission to government and, in effect, turned his followers into cowardly quietists.

Because Shirer’s best-seller has become standard fare for the history of Nazi Germany in the English-speaking world, the American publisher with forethought translated Siemon-Netto’s more innocuous German title *Luther als Wegbereiter Hitlers?* (*Luther as Forerunner of Hitler?*) with the catchier title *The Fabricated Luther: The Rise and Fall of the Shirer Myth*. Even though William Shirer is not the chief target of the author’s exposé, the English title captures the author’s intent for English-speaking audiences. Why? Because Shirer’s views encapsulate the cliché and the myth that needs the scrutiny of history to set the story straight.

Siemon-Netto does a masterful job in showing from documents how the Luther cliché had serious political and social consequences during and after World War II—for the German people generally and for Lutherans specifically. Recently the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., picked up on the cliché and unquestioningly portrays Martin Luther as the forefather of National Socialism. But more basically the cliché, as the author points out, misrepresents Luther’s biblical teaching of the two realms (*zwei Reichen*).

If one reads this book for no other reason, the author’s exposé should serve as a springboard for discussing the Christian distinction between church and state. In the polarization of the church-state discussion under modern social circumstances, many falsely portray Lutherans as separating their politics from their religion, thereby making them oblivious to the ethics and values promulgated by the corporate state. In this distorted view, public morality becomes the state’s business while the Christian’s duty is to work for a Christian society. Specifically, Lutheran Christians let the state be, work with it, and support its agenda without public criticism or a feeling of responsibility.

Siemon-Netto demonstrates from Luther’s writings, and from his own experiences as a Lutheran who grew up under Nazism and witnessed East German Communism, that such alleged Lutheran quietism did not square with his experience nor with Luther’s theology and actions. Lutherans did resist the evils of Nazism and Communism. The aim of his study is to “show that they (*Christian Germans*) acted in accordance with Martin Luther’s teachings on how and when to resist secular authority” (21).

To accomplish his goal and to expose the myth and cliché, the author uses several avenues. (1) He shows the cliché for what it is, a device to stereotype from a utopian perspective without taking into consideration historical contexts. Quoting Walther Kuenneth, an anti-Nazi German Lutheran theologian during the Third Reich, Siemon-Netto maintains that this “escape from history” is simultaneously an attempt “to flee from God” (35). In

trying “to immanentize the *eschaton*,” the cliché really takes its cues from post-enlightenment millennial ways of thinking.

In this respect the author traces an array of modern left-wing writings that portray Luther as the villain to the legacy of Thomas Muentzer and to the theology of Ernst Troelsch. Without being defensive about the intemperate language that Luther used on occasion, the rest of the book shows that Luther was no villain after all.

(2) The theological burden of the book is to show that Luther distinguished the two authorities that we call church and state, and did *not mix* them. Siemon-Netto argues that a wrong church-state mix, in fact, does not do justice to the state as God’s institution (Romans 13). In Luther’s teaching, God wants Christians to be “cooperators” in the orders he created for his rule on earth. Therefore Christians are fully citizens of two realms—the spiritual and the secular—and must act responsibly in each.

The critical question then for Luther becomes *when* and *how* a Christian is to act over against unjust and merciless leaders. Here the individual Christian must exercise his responsibility according to reason and conscience. Each Christian accepts suffering and injustice as part of his cross in life. He does not fight for his own cause, but he does act on his neighbor’s behalf. He does not resort to riot and rebellion to undo injustice, but he resists evil and unjust jurisdictions in an orderly way.

The one grave exception Luther recognizes is “where a prince, king or lord should lose his mind, he should be deposed and taken into custody. For he who has lost his reason is no longer to be considered to be human” (81). Even in this case, persons in recognized responsible positions should carry through this difficult task while not trying to undo secular order. In this connection the author traces Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s steps in joining Germany’s military intelligence service, the *Abwehr*, a powerful organization that actively opposed Hitler and sought to take his life.

(3) Whatever one’s judgments on Bonhoeffer’s resistance, the rest of the book spells out how Luther’s doctrine of the two realms was vindicated by leading Lutheran laymen in their opposition to Hitler, and again by the actions of the Lutheran populace in the German Democratic Republic.

The former mayor of Leipzig, Carl Goerdeler, the civilian head of the resistance against Hitler who actively attempted to warn world leaders about the evils of Hitler, and the congregation members of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, who held a prayer vigil without seeking confrontation with the Communist police—each in their own way exemplified how Lutherans exercised their responsibility as Christian citizens.

In summary, the author seeks to dispel the myth of Lutheran quietism by highlighting three key elements of Luther’s theology of the two realms. Each destroys the stereotype that Lutherans are politically unconcerned and sheeplike quietists. First, Luther was not a politician, a sociologist, or an ethicist. He was a theologian who gave advice on the basis of Scripture’s firm teaching that the secular order is God-ordained. Second, Luther’s biblical teaching freed Christian individuals for service as citizens in a world of political and ethical ambiguities. Third, Luther was not a quietist, but actively spoke against injustice and intolerance, and even reversed himself on the issue of resistance to tyranny.

In a brief to Elector John Frederick and Prince Philip of Hesse in 1538, Luther joined his colleagues in stating:

As the Gospel confirms the office of authority, it also confirms natural law. As Paul says, "*Lex est iniustis posita.*" And there is no doubt that a father is beholden, to the extent of his ability, to protect his child against murder committed by public authority, and there is no difference between a common murderer and the emperor when he abuses his office to perpetrate a violent injustice, especially if he uses force officially and notoriously. For according to natural law, official violence dissolves all obligations between subjects and rulers (87).

Luther often said that the world loves to be deceived. Siemon-Netto demonstrates how it has been deceived by a cliché. The debate concerning applications of the teaching of the two realms in respect to individual Christian's consciences will continue. But Siemon-Netto has managed to dispel the Luther-to-Hitler myth, thanks to his historical research.

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*The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind.* By Mark Noll. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994. 274 pages. Cloth.

■ Just when it seems that the evangelical movement is hopelessly addicted to American pragmatism, Mark Noll, professor at Wheaton College, Illinois, sounds the warning about a problem that threatens to destroy evangelicalism: "The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind." The scandal is brought about, according to Noll, by the fact that evangelicals have for the most part "abandoned" the "high" culture of our society. Doing is much more highly valued among evangelicals than thinking. Reflection, studied meditation, deep analysis, and probing investigation of philosophical and theological issues is not attractive to the vast majority of evangelicals today.

Noll explains the problem this way: "The evangelical ethos is activist, populist, pragmatic, and utilitarian. It allows little space for broader or deeper intellectual effort because it is dominated by the urgencies of the moment" (12). Noll pleads for toleration of the intellectual life. He writes, "If evangelicals acknowledge that it is appropriate, as a Christian, to be the best ball player or lawyer or bank executive or auto mechanic or operator of janitorial service or owner of a retirement home or third-grade teacher that God has made it possible for a person to be, why do evangelicals find it difficult to believe that it is also appropriate, as a Christian, to cultivate the life of the mind as thoroughly as it can be cultivated?" (55).

Noll devotes the longest portion of his book to a study of the origin of the scandal of the evangelical mind. He attributes the scandal of the evangelical mind to three main trends: revivalism, the separation of church and state, and the "synthesis of American and Christian values" (61). Noll argues convincingly that revivalism is hostile toward the life of the mind because it "called

people to Christ as a way of escaping tradition, including traditional learning" and thus "left the impression that individual believers could accept nothing from others" (63). Noll offers an amusingly revealing anecdote to illustrate his point. It seems that once two Kentucky revival preachers were confronted with quotations from Calvin that refuted their methods and message. They replied, "We are not personally acquainted with the writings of John Calvin, nor are we certain how nearly we agree with his views of divine truth; neither do we care" (63).

Noll makes an interesting point when he claims that the separation of church from state put churches in the position of competing for adherents for the first time in more than a thousand years. Thus churches had to "appeal directly to individuals" and "convince [them] that they should pay attention to God, and second, that they should do so in their churches and not elsewhere" (66). How was this done? Revivalism. Thus this resulted in a "religious market that caters to the individual and makes religion an individual decision" (66). Noll acknowledges that the separation of church from state gave churches a new energy and desire to fulfill the Great Commission, but the negative aspect of this was that "pragmatism would prevail over principle. What the churches required were results—new adherents—or they would simply go out of business. Thus the production of results had to override all other considerations" (67). Noll views the synthesis of Christianity with American culture to be detrimental to the life of the mind in that, for the most part, American culture threw its lot in with the anti-establishment, anti-intellectual, and anti-elitist tendencies of the libertarian movements sweeping through Europe and England during the seventeenth century.

Noll reserves his most pointed criticism for fundamentalism. He describes fundamentalism as a "response to the general changes in American life." He views fundamentalism as a reaction against the massive immigration to America of Roman Catholics, Jews, and the unchurched. Fundamentalism, according to Noll, "created major problems in several ways for the life of the mind. First, it gave a new impetus to general anti-intellectualism; second, it hardened conservative evangelical commitments to certain features of nineteenth-century evangelicalism-American synthesis that were problematic to begin with; and third, its major theological emphases had a chilling effect on the exercise of Christian thinking about the world" (115).

The third part of the book is titled simply "Hope?" Noll wonders aloud whether we are witnessing today an "Evangelical Intellectual Renaissance." He asserts that, beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, there developed four trends that offered a healthy balance to fundamentalism. "Against the heritage of intuition appeared somewhat more self-criticism, against simple biblicism a growing awareness of the complexities of Scripture, against populism an increased longing for advanced higher education, and alongside activism the beginnings of the respect for study" (213). He laments the fact that evangelicals seem able only to "find intellectual depth—a way of praising God through the mind—in ideas developed by confessional or mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics, or perhaps even the Eastern Orthodox" (239). But Noll is not ready to throw in the towel. He points to evangelical theology as the source of ultimate hope. He concludes his book with this observation and challenge:



The effort to think like a Christian is . . . an effort to take seriously the sovereignty of God over the world he created, the lordship of Christ over the world he died to redeem, and the power of the Holy Spirit over the world he sustains each and every moment. From this perspective the search for a mind that truly thinks like a Christian takes on ultimate significance, because the search for a Christian mind is not, in the end, a search for mind but a search for God (253).

The book left this reviewer with a rather hollow feeling. It attempts to end on a high note, but actually strikes a dissonant chord. Sadly, it is the evangelical “search for God” that is its most fundamental problem. That God has searched us out and continues to draw us to himself through his very real and very present activities among us—through the waters of Baptism, the words of Absolution and preaching, and the Lord’s Table—is something that continues to elude evangelicalism. Due to its Reformed and Arminian heritage, evangelicalism is robbed of the power and comfort of the means of grace, by which Christ our Lord traverses the time and space of history to meet each of us, when and where we are, with his mercy through the merits of his Son. Our Lord is not present among his people because of their search for him, but because of his promise to be with them always. Nowhere is this promise of our Lord more tangibly realized than in the Holy Communion, where the very body and blood offered by the Son to the Father on the cross is given by God to us. The tragedy of evangelicalism is its inability to come to terms with the sacramental theology of the Scriptures and the historic Christian church down through the ages. This is the greatest scandal of the evangelical mind.

So then, how are Lutherans, particularly confessional Lutherans, to react to this sort of book? Noll follows the work of other evangelical leaders and thinkers, such as David Wells, Os Guinness, Michael Horton, and John MacArthur. With Noll, each would be able to write of his own work, “This book is an epistle from a wounded lover” (ix). Each makes a poignant and moving *cri de coeur*. It may be tempting for confessional Lutherans to sit back smugly and mutter, “Serves them right.” But some soul-searching questions are in order. Are we Lutherans too willing to be motivated only by “urgencies of the moment?” Are we too easily attracted to the quick fix and the easy solution to the challenges of our culture? Are we ready to “do whatever it takes” to “succeed” in an increasingly hostile, secular, and anti-Christian society? Books such as Noll’s are “wake-up calls” not only to the evangelical community but also to the Lutheran community. American pragmatism is certainly no stranger to Lutheran responses to the “urgencies of the moment.” Lutherans too are tempted to supplant substantial theological reflection with emotional “infotainment.” Because we have our roots in an immigrant community, we Lutherans have always been tempted to “go along to get along” with our evangelical, fundamentalist, Reformed, and Arminian neighbors. Lutherans would do well not to neglect this book, for indeed, we face in many similar ways our own scandal—the scandal of the Lutheran mind.

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*The Hindu Connection: Roots of the New Age.* By Victor Raj. St. Louis: CPH, 1995. 240 pages.

■ Several years ago in *Christianity Today*, senior editor Kenneth Kantzer, a Baptist, wrote an article praising the Lutheran Church for her great theological heritage. After heaping generous accolades upon Lutheranism for all that it is and has to offer, Kantzer’s closing remark was as follows: “Our prayer is that Lutherans will settle their internal disputes and stem the tide of liberalism within their ranks so that they can contribute to better and more effective leadership for evangelical Christianity.” A noble wish on Kantzer’s part. A Lutheran cure, however, may not be all that agreeable to an evangelical disease.

*The Hindu Connection: Roots of the New Age*, by A. R. Victor Raj, along with this reviewer’s own work, *Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions, and the Occult*, are both attempts to provide a specifically Lutheran response to the cults, occult, and alternative religions. Hopefully this will be the beginning of much more Lutheran leadership in the area of apologetics and cult research.

Raj’s book is a study of the New Age Movement. But it is more than that. Because the author is concerned with tracing the history of the New Age, his travels have necessarily taken him to its very roots, namely, Hinduism. If Hinduism is the foundation for the New Age Movement, Raj tells us that “The New Age is the New Testament of Hinduism” (13). The author admits the difficulty of classifying the New Age and assigning the movement any one specific definition (11). His first chapter then is a discourse on various “Theories of Religion.” These include good discussions in the philosophy of religion, psychology, sociology, and theology of religion. The author is here attempting to point out that these various disciplines paved the way for a thoroughgoing secularism that would then enable the twentieth century to welcome the New Age with open arms. Having laid the foundation, chapter two goes on to discuss the religion of the New Age, which then leads to chapter 3, entitled “Hindu Openness: A Fascination for the West”; chapter 4: “Philosophical Hinduism”; chapter 5: “The Hindu-Christian Connection”; chapter 6: “Some Issues in Contemporary Christology;” and finally, chapter 7: “The Gospel: A Privilege to Proclaim.”

While Raj is at home in quoting nineteenth-century sources, both theological and philosophical—and this is certainly important, as stated above—he offers little in the way of modern sources, especially New Age writers. This is where the reader could be better helped in terms of a definition of what the New Age Movement actually is. Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, for example, in their 1982 book, *Networking*, define the New Age as “a metanetwork of organizations that are autonomous, yet bound together. Networks are composed of self-reliant and autonomous participants—people and organizations who simultaneously function as independent ‘holes’ and as interdependent ‘parts.’” Crucial sources essential for understanding New Age thought such as Fritjof Capra’s *The Tao of Physics* and *The Turning Point*, Marilyn Ferguson’s *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, or Benjamin Creme’s *The Reappearance of Christ and the Masters of Wisdom*, are not quoted or referred to by Raj. Although he does quote other modern sources that do refer to these seminal New Age sources, the book would be greatly

improved if it did so itself. Even though Raj is exploring the “roots” of the New Age Movement, failing to include some of the basic sources leaves the reader with the impression that it was only Hinduism and liberal Christian thought since the Enlightenment that has shaped the New Age Movement into what it is today. This is not entirely true. Much of what the New Age is has been defined by thinkers within the last thirty years who have gone far beyond the foundational religious roots to explore the scientific (Fritjof Capra, Ian Barbour), medical (holistic health), psychological (personal transformation and the so called Consciousness Movement), as well as the effects it has had in the arts and in late twentieth-century culture. To understand the New Age, one must reckon with the cultural milieu and overall worldview that it has produced. This criticism being leveled, it nevertheless should be stated that the author has indeed done his homework with respect to Hindu sources and to the various Hindu precursors. Importantly, theosophy is discussed along with its founder, Madame Helena Blavatsky. Many New Age sources refer to Blavatsky as the most immediate nineteenth-century precursor to the New Age Movement today.

The last chapter, “The Gospel: A Privilege to Proclaim,” sums up for the reader why the gospel can and should bring about a true transformation for the New Ager in search of the truth. Raj quotes an adequate amount of Scripture and points to two references in *The Book of Concord* to make his point. What is missing, however, in terms of a specifically Lutheran Christological assessment, which stands in direct contrast to both Hinduism and the New Age, is a sacramental theology. While Raj does most adequately point to “Christ as Lord,” Christ as “the image of the invisible God,” “the firstborn over all creation” (210–212), and the central locus of the Christian faith over and against Hindu claims to the contrary, he shortchanges himself by not applying this Christology to its fullest, that is to say, its sacramental implications. Raj states, for example, “True spiritual fellowship and lasting relationships in communities, therefore are the tangible marks of Christianity” (210). But “true spiritual fellowship” and “lasting relationships in communities” could just as well be the tangible marks of Buddhism. The problem comes in defining what “spiritual” means or what true fellowship is. This confusion is utterly avoided when spiritual fellowship is properly understood in terms of what the Christian faith means by it, namely, *koinonia*, or sacrament! This is the very Christology that is sorely lacking in the evangelical Protestant camp for which Kantzer pleads help. Raj has written an excellent book but stops short of this. The Chalcedonian Christology of the fourth century fully enabled the church to challenge gnosticism, which, in its “Christian” form, could not embrace the doctrine of the incarnation. This had immediate implications, of course, as to how the two natures of Christ would be understood, and from there, for an understanding of the sacramental presence of Christ in subsequent Christian worship. Chalcedonian Christology was fully able to expose gnosticism for what it really was: a dualistic spirituality that has in our day experienced a complete revival in the New Age. Gnostics in the early Church not only denied the humanity of Christ, but in its “Christian” form, spiritualized every aspect of Christian faith. In the New Age, Benjamin Creme’s “Christ,” for example, is thoroughly gnostic. In addition to the New Age Movement, the occult, feminist paganism, the

proliferation of cults, and experience-oriented feel-good evangelical Protestantism have all certainly borne witness to the fact that gnosticism is alive and well in the latter half of the twentieth century. Therefore any Lutheran apologetic must not only preach Jesus (evangelicals are quite capable of talking about Jesus too), but it must proclaim the whole gospel in a way that gnosticism can never allow by definition (law-gospel; word-sacrament; deity-humanity; theology of the cross; nature-grace are all implied in Lutheran systematics). The sacramental dimension of our theology as Lutherans is precisely that very sense of catholicity that is Christianity and that is fully inclusive of a Christological, incarnational, soteriological, ecclesiological, and eschatological theology. Raj’s book would have been greatly improved if these dimensions had been explored, for this is precisely where evangelicalism today falls short and is left with a Bible-proof-texting apologetics. Raj’s book, however, does offer a serious analysis of a complicated movement, and it avoids the numerous pitfalls of a Protestant *apologia*. Therefore *The Hindu Connection* deserves to be read, and in fact should be.

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**God with Us: Pastoral Theology of Matthew’s Gospel.** By Mark Allan Powell. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1995. 156 pages. Paper.

■ By pushing aside questions of historical criticism, tradition, and authorship, narrative criticism goes directly to the text of the Gospels with topical questions and handles it at face value with no concern for levels of authenticity for separate pericopes. Previous practitioners of this method asked systematic questions on, for example, Christology and ecclesiology (ix). As the subtitle indicates, Powell addresses pastoral ones—mission, worship, teaching, stewardship, social justice—a hardly detectable difference. To see how the method works, consider worship. The chapter on worship is divided into sections, with thirteen references to it: supplicatory, responsive, and epiphanic kinds of worship, forms of worship, moods of worship, worshipers, settings of worship, recipients of worship, and finally, worship and teaching. We learn that Jesus is worshiped as God, that catechesis is needed (though in some cases worship comes before formal instruction), and that children worship. Apart from the author’s intentions, traditional dogmatic theology benefits by this method as it finds arguments for the deity of Jesus, a well-ordered catechesis, and even infant baptism. The method also unearths inconsequential data: for instance, one worshiper was leprous and others presumably healthy (54), and some worshipers knelt.

Matthew, anonymous single author or community, probably never came close to thinking in terms of some sub-headings: human relationships, ethnic status, moods, and health issues. A generation after ours might find all of this to be antique. At one time, seminary courses required word studies. Narrative criticism proceeds similarly. Weakness lies in placing an equal value on each occurrence of a word or idea and then arriving at a conclusion. Narrative criticism never gets behind words (text) to a greater reality or any reality at all. It is no naïve fundamentalism

that requires a one-for-one equation between what happened and what is reported, but it does not get behind the text. It already knows that the scholarly agreement on historical data behind the text is meager. The author tips his hat in this direction by seeing Matthew as a composite document from Mark, “Q,” the redactor, the community. Ho-hum! “Matthew” becomes an autonomous document and is not interpreted in any pre- or post- context. It provides its own interpretation in the face of the questions addressed to it. Whether Jesus and the disciples had anything to do with what is done or reported is of no concern. All portions of the text are on the same level. Subtlety and emphasis intended by the author are lost.

The theological possibilities of narrative criticism are sufficient enough reason to pay attention to it and to Powell’s work. They would be sharpened if this were seen within the context of the history of Jesus and the apostles and the dogmatic tradition that developed out of these Gospels. This tradition saw theological themes in the Gospel and ranked them in comparative importance.

Narrative criticism will never be the last word in New Testament studies. The majority of scholars are still going to ask: What does Matthew (or Luke for that matter) have to do with Jesus? Even if they answer, “Very little,” the question will never go away.

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*Catechism of the Catholic Church.* Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1994. 803 pages. Paper.

■ Anyone who thinks that theology has become irrelevant should consider the immense popularity of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Several newspaper articles and scholarly reviews called the importance of the catechism to my attention, but I only obtained a copy when a student said he had purchased the paperback edition for \$11.95 at Target(!). When I got there, the price was at \$14.95. Still, at five dollars below the listed price of \$19.95 it was a bargain. Most newspaper reviews headed for the catechism’s economic manifestos, based as they were on Vatican encyclicals on social justice and the claim that Jews and Moslems were going to be saved. These documents seem to breathe the air of socialism (471). I am not sure that any of the Catholic population takes these encyclicals with nearly the same seriousness with which they were issued. Do Catholic leaders really listen to what the pope says? In any event, the heavy emphasis Roman Catholicism places on natural law takes them more quickly into the political arena than Lutherans, who seem more shy. The press has given proportionately more attention to this issue than the catechism does. So it is also with the fate of Jews and Moslems. In actual space this issue takes about half a page (222–223), and what is said is not entirely clear. Jews are called “God’s people of the Old Covenant,” but they are also described as “not knowing or . . . misunderstanding Christ Jesus.” Moslems are those who with Catholics “adore the one merciful God, mankind’s judge on the last day.” Are these really assurances of salvation? Properly baptized believers in Christ “are put in a certain, although imperfect communion with the

Catholic Church.” This is a bit more assuring for concerned Lutherans and does put the proper emphasis on baptism and faith, even though we would insist that from God’s perspective the church is a communion already made perfect in Christ.

Since Roman Catholics are singing with gusto Luther’s “A Mighty Fortress” and “From Heaven Above,” we might have expected reference to him in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. After all, for nearly half a millennium he has been as much an influence on that church—and not only in a negative way—as anyone else. Disappointment! Luther is not found in the index of church fathers (741–752), and neither is his view found in the text that grace is God’s gracious attitude in Christ Jesus whereby he redeems and justifies all people. Rome still goes no farther than seeing grace as “infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it” (484). References to “The New Law or the Law of the Gospel” (477–481) show that fundamental Reformation differences remain unresolved.

Still, there is much about the new catechism in regard to style and content that attracts. Pages 99–276 follow the outline of the Apostles’ Creed (the total text runs 688 pages). While we might take exception here or there (for example, that Christ by descending to the dead liberated Old Testament saints), we certainly agree with the substance of the Christian faith set forth here. Some sections can be taken over without adjustment. Luther and the reformers recognized this common ground in the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, so in a certain sense we have not lost any ground here. Lutherans have never denied that the true church with the word and sacraments is found in Rome. Now in a limited sense they have extended the same courtesy to us. We wait for them to say that our celebration of the Lord’s Supper and ministry are acceptable, but we are not holding our breath. One step at a time, and it is better than being anathematized. God will bring about the perfect consummation before we do.

Commentators recognize that the new catechism preserves what has been commonly recognized as the traditional Catholic faith, but I would add, with some rough edges worn off a little. Purgatory rates one page (268–269) with no place in the index. Mary merits four pages (251–254) and makes cameo appearances here and there, hardly the largesse given her in common Catholic piety. Her prayers in heaven are seen as extension of her presence with the apostles after the ascension, and her assumption is explained as an “anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians” (252). Even if we do not accept this, the thought is nice. Any enthusiasm from our side, however, is dampened by continuing to call her “Benefactress and Mediatrix” (252). (Did they have to do that?)

Lutherans do not really have to change much what they thought Roman Catholics believed. More important is whether the rank and file of Catholic clergy and people will have to change. Within the spectrum that is the Roman Catholic Church, the catechism is a conservative production. For some years non-Catholic Christians could not be sure what that church believed. Our dilemma about their confusion is theoretically relieved. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* could make us Lutherans envious enough to produce a similar work. It follows a familiar form of creed, sacraments, commandments, prayer—though we might want to readjust seeing the life in Christ under the command-

ments. More than a catechism, it is really a dogmatics book for the people. With an index and numbering of paragraphs, even the novice can easily find his way around the subjects. Quotations are taken from the early church fathers up to St. Rose of Lima (year 1668). Why not Luther? The *Didache* is a magnificent early reference, but is it established as part of legitimate catholic tradition? Catholicism is no different from Lutheranism in having its members raise questions to which answers are not readily available. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* answers this need for them and gives the rest of us some reference points in understanding them.

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## BRIEFLY NOTED

*Either/Or: The Gospel or Neopaganism.* Edited by Carl E. Braaten and Robert Jenson. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995.

■ These papers were originally presented at a conference sponsored by the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology in April 1993 at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. The essays seek to address the findings of sociologists Johnson, Hoge, and Ludens that many mainline church members are “lay liberals who have no clear understanding of what Christianity is or why they are Christians” (see “Mainline Churches: The Real Reason for Decline,” *First Things* [March 1993]: 15).

The programmatic essay for the collection is by Carl Braaten, “The Gospel for a Neopagan Culture.” Here Braaten’s call to the church is clear: “Let the church be the church! If the church must decrease so that Christ must increase, let it be. The church is not free to be megachurch at all cost. The church is not free to cultivate a spirituality of self-fulfillment. The church is not free to entertain every novel hermeneutic of Scripture. The church is not free to invoke the ancestral spirits at home in the aboriginal religions or pray to the goddesses of the ancient mystery-cults. The church’s dogma forbids it. That is what dogma is for, to prevent paganism from entering the ‘holy of holies’ where the worship of Christ erupts to the praise of the triune God” (19). Only a high Christology will be able to save the church from the onslaught of neopaganism, says Braaten.

Robert Jenson, Braaten’s colleague at the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology, stakes out the church’s place in current culture in a provocative essay entitled “The God-Wars,” using abortion and euthanasia as “test cases.” The least compelling contribution to this collection is “Christian Universalism: The Nonexclusive Particularity of Salvation in Christ” by J. A. DiNoia. DiNoia attempts to refute the pluralist theologies of Paul Knitter and John Hick without adopting an “exclusive” definition of salvation. Robert Wilken contributes “Serving the One True God,” decrying the tentativeness of Christian discourse in our day. Kenneth Paul Wesche’s “Keeping the Faith: An Orthodox Perspective—An Essay on the Ascetic Character of Christian Theological Method” offers a theological method grounded in christology

and ecclesiology. L. Gregory Jones presents an excellent critique of the “triumph of the therapeutic” in the churches. The volume is rounded out by the reflections of former bishop of the LCA James Crumley on church leadership.

*How to Respond to the Muslims.* By Ernest Hahn. St. Louis: CPH, 1995.

■ Hahn, a veteran LCMS missionary to the Muslims, provides a concise historical introduction to Islam, a survey of the place of Islam in North America, compares and contrasts Islam with Christianity, and offers suggestions for evangelistic outreach to Muslims.

*Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture.* By Marva J. Dawn. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995.

■ The intriguing title of this book does not match its content. After a perceptive treatment of contemporary culture and its impact on the worship life of North American culture, the author attempts to construct a theology of worship and draw out implications for evangelism. Dawn attempts to reconcile an understanding of liturgy as “work of the people” with the classical Lutheran insistence of liturgy as *Gottesdienst*, so God becomes both the subject and object of worship. The focus of Dawn’s theology of worship is geared toward the cultic community rather than the God who comes to serve his people in word and sacrament. The feminist hymns of Brian Wren are held up as models of good contemporary hymnody (191). In short, Dawn advocates that a blending of traditional and contemporary styles will bring an end to the “worship wars.”

*Masonic Lodge.* By George A. Mather and Larry A. Nichols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995.

■ Two LCMS pastors well-known for their scholarship on cults and sects (see their *Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions, and the Occult*) team up to write a guide to the history and religious tenets of masonry in the Zondervan Guide to Religious Movements Series. Written in outline form, this book is an excellent resource for an adult Bible class. The authors argue that Freemasonry is a religion with highly-defined positions on God, Christ, salvation, human nature, and sin. The connections with the occult are explored. A chart contrasting the teachings of the Masons with orthodox Christianity adds to the usefulness of this book.

*A Life of John Calvin.* By Alister E. McGrath. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990.

■ A general survey of the life and world of John Calvin. McGrath pays attention to the formation of Calvin’s mind and his move from “Humanist to Reformer.” The final three chapters are devoted to the genesis of Calvinism and its impact on western culture.



***The School of the Church: Worship and Christian Formation.*** By Philip H. Pfatteicher. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1995.

■ Pfatteicher, a clergyman of the ELCA and a professor of English at East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania, has authored several books in liturgics including a commentary on the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *Festivals and Commemorations*. In *The School of the Church*, Pfatteicher explores the nature, function, and power of liturgical language as it shapes the character of those who participate.

***Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine.*** By Don E. Sailers. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.

■ According to the author "This book stands at the intersection of three pathways of reflection: liturgical studies, theological aesthetics, and eschatology" (13). The first part of the book is devoted to theological reflection on liturgy as Sailers enters into

conversation with Karl Barth. In the second part of *Worship as Theology*, prayer is examined in light of "the presence and absence of God." The third and final portion of this book looks at liturgy in the context of culture. It appears that Geoffrey Wainwright and Gordon Lathrop are primary sources of influence for Sailers.

***Herman Sasse A Bibliography.*** Ronald R. Feuerhahn. American Theological Library Association, Bibliography Series, No. 37. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1995. xx + 245 pages. \$40.00.

■ This is the first book in the ATLA series by or about a Lutheran. It seems an appropriate way in which to mark the centennial year of Sasse's birth. The book lists all editions, reprints, and translations of his writings; the short title index is very helpful. Given that nearly half of his works were in German, the book is bilingual. The book is available from the publisher, Scarecrow Press (part of the University Press of America) or from the Seminary Store, Concordia Seminary, 801 De Mun, St. Louis, MO 63105.

JTP

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*Review by Robert Preus in LOGIA, Vol. III, No. 4,  
Reformation 1994, page 53*

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*Review by John A. Moldstad Jr. in LOGIA, Vol. II, No. 4,  
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# LOGIA Forum

## SHORT STUDIES AND COMMENTARY

### CONVERSATION AND CONSOLATION

"The mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren." This short quote from the Smalcald Articles (SA III, IV) is the object of considerable confusion. Some would see here an allusion to the temporal assistance and comfort regularly exchanged among believers. Others understand "mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren" as a clear endorsement of lay evangelism activities and programs. Still others view this phrase as a reference to some kind of clergy interaction, employing it to justify everything from formal pastors' conferences to ministers' golf tournaments. Luther, however, intended none of these common interpretations.

In SA III, IV, "*Vom Evangelium*" ("Of the Gospel"), Luther listed what we commonly refer to as the "means of grace," the various ways in which men are given "council and help against sin." Luther cited preaching, the spoken Word (*mündliche Wort*), as the first and foremost mode of God's gracious dealings with men. He then listed the other ways that God aids and supports Christians, each of which he treated at length in subsequent articles: "through Baptism" (SA III, V); "through the holy Sacrament of the Altar" (SA III, VI); "through the power of the keys" (SA III, VII); and, finally, "through the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren," which one might logically expect to be the topic of SA III, VIII.

Since social concerns and clergy dialog have never been listed among the "means of grace," it should come as no surprise that SA III, VIII does not describe clothes drives, food pantries, pastors' conferences, golf tournaments, or even friendly theological debate. Neither does it describe lay evangelism calls. SA III, VIII does, however, provide Luther's intended referent for this

often misunderstood and repeatedly misapplied confessional quotation. For Luther, to speak of "the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren" is to speak *von der Beichte*, of the holy sacrament of Confession and Absolution.

Some might object to this interpretation, arguing that the Sacrament of Confession and Absolution described by Luther in his Large and Small Catechisms is not "mutual." Indeed, the pastor does not absolve the penitent, who in turn absolves the pastor. Thus an initial reaction might be that confession and absolution could hardly be the referent of "The mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren" if the entire activity must, in fact, be mutual.

A careful examination of Luther's original text is revealing here. The Latin phrase under consideration (*mutuum colloquium et consolationem fratrum*) is generally viewed in a holistic way, with *mutuum* and *fratrum* modifying both *colloquium* and *consolationem* as though they were a single, unified activity. That is to say, conversation and consolation are treated as a single unit with the terms "mutual" and "of the brethren" distributed to both. Under this scheme, the Latin phrase might also be rendered: "the mutual and brotherly conversation and consolation." Such a rendering would certainly strain the possibility that Luther here describes confession and absolution. The Latin text, however, need not be so rendered. The *mutuum colloquium* and the *consolationem fratrum* can also be understood as two separate but related activities.

Grammatically, the conversation is *mutual* but not *of the brethren*; the *consolation* is *of the brethren* but not *mutual*. These two distinct parts are joined, but not mixed, and together they form one unified means of grace. Through these two distinctive yet complementary activities, as through law and gospel, the people of God are offered counsel and help against sin.

In his Enchiridion, Martin Chemnitz described the kinds of confession retained in the Lutheran Church. Included in his list was the "private discussion with individuals," or, as it is similarly identified, "private conversation" (Q 298). Such confession is said to be helpful because it is a two-way activity; the pastor and penitent are engaged in salutary dialog. Both parties speak *and* listen. The pastor hears the penitent's confession, learns of his life and doctrinal understanding, then counsels him from the Word of God. The penitent speaks into the pastor's ear, tells his troubles, confesses his sins, then receives the pastor's instruction. Questions are asked. Answers are given. The conversation is truly mutual. This is the kind of confession that Luther praised in SA III, VIII. This is the kind of confession that he claimed was so

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necessary for the “untrained young people who need to be examined and instructed in Christian doctrine.” This is the kind of Confession that “should by no means be allowed to fall into disuse in the church.” Such confession, described in SA III, VIII, is to be identified with the “mutual conversation” of SA III, IV.

Although this mutual conversation type of confession can be extremely helpful, it is not an end unto itself. It is law—all law—and serves primarily to prepare the penitent for the Gospel, the holy absolution. Augustana XXV thus depicts this absolution: “the people are carefully instructed concerning the *consolation* of the word of absolution so that they may esteem absolution as a great and precious thing. It is not the voice of the man who speaks it, but it is the word of God, who forgives sin, for it is spoken in God’s stead and by God’s command.”

In the Small Catechism (V, 18), the individual whose voice God uses to convey the absolution is called, in German, the “confessor” (*Beichtiger*). In the Latin translation, however, this same individual is identified as the “brother” (*fratre*). Luther also used “brother” as a virtual synonym for “confessor” in his Large Catechism. In the *Brief Exhortation to Confession*, Luther described the sacrament of confession and absolution as that “which takes place privately before a single *brother*” (*Bruder, fratre*). The penitent, according to Luther, may at any time and as often as he wishes, approach the “brother seeking his advice, comfort, and strength.”

“[I]f there is a heart that feels its sin and desires consolation,” Luther continued, “it has here a sure refuge when it hears in God’s Word that through a man God looses and absolves him from his sins” (13–14). SA III, VIII similarly describes this absolution or the power of the keys, offered privately by the minister as “a consolation and help against sin and a bad conscience.” Such absolution, spoken by a confessor, is the “consolation of the brethren” listed as one of the means of grace in SA III, IV.

The intended referents for the “mutual conversation” and the “consolation of the brethren,” therefore, are no mystery. They directly correspond to the two parts of confession forwarded in Luther’s Small Catechism: “One is that we confess our sins” (*mutuum colloquium*). “The other is that we receive absolution, or forgiveness, from the confessor as from God himself” (*consolationem fratrum*). Together, they are nothing less than the gospel itself, one of the several ways in which merciful God is “surpassingly rich in his grace” toward the conscience-stricken sinner.

One final note: It is interesting (and perhaps also significant) that although the Smalcald Articles were written in German, Luther suddenly switched to Latin in SA III, IV to express the final mode of Gospel application: *und auch per mutuum colloquium et consolationem fratrum*. A similar linguistic shift occurs in the very next paragraph (SA III, V) when Luther cites Augustine’s familiar axiom concerning the Sacraments: *wie auch Augustinus sagt: Accedat verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum*. This similarity would suggest that the Latin phrase *per mutuum colloquium et consolationem fratrum*, like the Latin phrase *Accedat verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum*, was not original with Luther.

Perhaps Luther did not string these somewhat cryptic words together of his own accord, but only borrowed this technical, theological terminology from some source unknown to us today. Perhaps the phrase is a linguistic remnant of the earlier practice of making confession to monks, “brothers,” rather than to the

local parish priest (see AC, Conclusion, 2). This could certainly explain the present hesitation in identifying “mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren” as the holy sacrament of confession and absolution.

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## STYLE, STYLE, STYLE

*Just in case there are a few readers out there who have not yet spent themselves on the Style and Substance debate fostered by David Luecke, here is a selection from Fit Bodies, Fat Minds by Os Guinness (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 89–90.*

At its heart, style is a term of identification, as substance is. But style and substance are in direct contrast. Substance is a matter of who or what someone or something is; style is the manner through which that distinctiveness is presented and perceived.

The term “style” has traditionally identified the leading characteristic or ruling taste of a period or school—in the sense that we refer to “Romanesque” and “Gothic” architecture or to “classical,” “impressionist,” and “cubist” art. Each new style is in some ways a break from the past and embodies a different way of seeing or doing things. But what matters in this usage is that style is viewed as the outer expression of the inner character of the period. The style, therefore, is as enduring as the period itself.

Today, however, style has become an end in itself. No longer expressive of substance or inner character, style is all that matters now. No longer enduring, it is transient, changeable, and fashion-oriented. As a glance at any magazine rack will show, style is the number one mantra of late twentieth-century America.

Used more often on magazine covers than even the word “sex,” style is a leading source of anxiety, hope, and fascination for millions. To be up-to-date and in touch with one’s style is essential; to be out-of-date or out-of-touch is unforgivable. At a time when permanence of personality is as forlorn as permanence of place, change is the order of the day. Identity is now a matter of perception and presentation. And style is the art of skillfully presenting illusions as we walk down the corridor of images that make up modern society.

From the perspective of its purveyors, style is the official currency of marketing products. From the perspective of consumers, style is the leading idiom of the image of one’s choice—the desired sense of projected meaning and belonging. Style, image, and consumption are foundational to modern identity and discourse. In a world of increasing anonymity where scrutiny by unknown others is our daily norm, style is a sort of armor for city life. Wear something and walk down the street and you don’t just say, “I like this,” but “I’m like this.”

As Stuart Ewen shows [*All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture*, New York: Basic Books, 1988], style is the sorcery that turns the banal necessities of our everyday world into an enchanted utopia of mouth-watering freedom. This is the illusory world where no conflicts grate and no needs are unmet. If modern society is a *Vanity Fair* of consumable styles, style itself is the ultimate in human self-advertising.

## THE HOLINESS QUEST

*Here is a recently composed forward to a classic Lutheran standard—Adolf Koeberle's Quest for Holiness—written by the Reverend Dr. David Scaer. A limited number of volumes of Koeberle's book has just been reprinted by Ballast Press, PO Box 1193, Evansville, IN 47706–1193. Send for your copy before it goes out of print again.*

March 12, 1958, is listed in my copy of Adolf Koeberle's *Quest for Holiness* as the date of acquisition. Handwritten notes in the margins indicate an important influence at the seminary. It was not assigned, but often real learning takes place away from the classrooms. Among the notations are St. Augustine's oft repeated words: "Our souls are restless until they find their rest in thee." They also describe Luther's search for peace with God and his discovery in justification by faith. By extension it depicts every human attempt, successful or not, in coming to terms with life and the possibility of God and his function for that life. The true God provides the only answer in Jesus Christ and renders other questions unimportant. More than half a century after its first publication, *The Quest for Holiness* still provides that answer for restless souls.

In 1960 I met Professor Koeberle, a slightly built man with thinning dark hair imperceptibly turning gray. At that time, church controversy narrowed itself down to biblical inspiration. Questions of justification and sanctification belonged to a brightness of a lesser magnitude, and Koeberle appeared as but one figure among towering others who challenged Bultmann's debunking of biblical history by demythologizing and his definition of the gospel as discovery of the authentic self. A pseudo-philosophy draped in psychological terms spliced with historical skepticism threatened Christianity. If in the face of denial and redefinition of the gospel the Bible remained intact, other issues would be easily resolved, so many thought.

Such optimism was simplistic at best and proved illusory. This was not the doctrine by which the church stood or fell, though it was gravitating toward that honor. Bultmann is now taken less seriously, and at the theological center remains the Reformation doctrine of salvation by faith. It still divides Lutherans from Rome and from those neo-evangelicals who define faith as decision, a self-motivated act of the will. This redefinition amounts to denial. The popularity of this different definition of faith makes Koeberle's *Quest for Holiness* even more necessary.

Luther's doctrine of justification was not one among others which were gleaned from the biblical texts, but signified God's claim on the believer through faith (justification) which involved his entire life (sanctification). Sanctification, no less than justification, was a matter of first *sola gratia* and then *sola fide*. Faith, with Christ as its substance, encompassed justification and sanctification into one reality. Luther's struggle was as much over sanctification as it was justification. Medieval Catholicism agreed that God was faith's author, but held that salvation depended upon a complex system of penance, masses, pilgrimage, and eventually purgatory to compensate for an inadequate life of sanctification. Gospel was not the last word. Works were.

For Luther, the gospel was both the first word (justification) and the last (sanctification). He brought St. Augustine's search for peace to a conclusion. In the gospel, restless souls did find

their rest in God. History soon showed that self-justifying human nature is uncomfortable in finding its contentment in the gospel. Restless souls find rest in God, but they cannot overcome the false belief that they can find it in themselves.

No longer was this only a problem with a Catholicism formulated by Trent for Rome, but with the Reformation churches. Reformed theology in the sixteenth century and Lutheran Pietism in the seventeenth century curtailed the gospel freedom by making the restrictions of the law a factor in sanctification. It was understood as morality. Reformation terminology of salvation by grace through faith remained in place, but the emphasis was switched to what believers could do for God and so assure themselves of salvation. Sanctification had again replaced justification at theology's center. Fear of God's punishing wrath as a motivation for sanctification comes from Calvin. Luther's heritage was lost.

Eighteenth-century Enlightenment Rationalists went the next step by removing the miraculous from the biblical accounts and understood sanctification as ethics. Then Schleiermacher found the source for ethics within the life of the Christian communities. After Schleiermacher, modern Protestant liberalism offered in place of sanctification the Social Gospel with its intent to improve society. Pietism—by separating sanctification from justification—paved the way for these modern aberrations. Developed along such lines, Christianity loses its claim as unique among the world religions, some of which offered equally convincing moral challenges. Thus Pietism and its successors must relinquish any claim to furthering the kingdom of God, for in this they have failed noticeably. Self-originating morality within and without the church merely serves to initiate self-destruction.

The twentieth century is a moral global failure. Koeberle lays out the theological dimensions of the proper relationship between justification and sanctification with the necessary historical references. While tracing the origins of the weaknesses of a modern Protestantism, he also warns against isolating justification from sanctification. They are theological distinctions, not different realities capable of substantive or chronological separation.

Justification no more exists without sanctification than faith exists without works. Justification and sanctification are different sides of one reality. Where they are separated, sermons become dogmatical essays or ethical discourses. Justification defines the believer's posture with God and sanctification describes his posture in the world. In Christ's redemption, God justifies and sanctifies the believer. Justification is not merely an act of a sovereign God, nor is sanctification an autonomous human act, but both originate in Christ who provides himself as their sole substance. Where Christ is omitted, justification appears as arbitrary and sanctification degenerates into legalism.

At the time of Koeberle's writing, neo-evangelicalism (with its effective and much-appreciated protest against the historically destructive criticism of the Bible) lay in the distant future. Still, the movement belongs to the Reformed tradition in making the law a factor in sanctification. Where sanctification takes on a life of its own, as it did in Lutheran Pietism, the core of Christianity deteriorates. The same danger afflicts Lutheranism through neo-evangelicalism.

Neo-evangelicalism is for Lutherans today what Pietism was three hundred years ago. Sanctification follows justification and



Thank God, there are still women who share blessed Mary's approach to motherhood. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to your word." Children are a gift to be nurtured by their mothers. Children are a treasure to be protected by their fathers as St. Joseph guarded the Christ Child. Motherhood is not an inconvenience; it is a vocation. The image of God glows in a good mother; it shines like a dazzling star in the night sky in a Christian mother.

When we behave like brutes we are degraded. His love is Jesus' glory, and our love is our glory given us in him. Our families are apt to shrivel up if we don't root and sustain them in the family of the blessed Trinity which came into the world when our Lord became a Son twice over and founded his church. Kneeling to receive Jesus' body and blood, we take part in the greatest of all family reunions. Let yourself be loved today, share with each other the love that is lavished on you, and do what you can for the defenseless victims of our inhuman lovelessness.

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## LENTEN SERMON

*This sermon on Matthew 4:1–11 was preached by the Reverend Dr. Norman Nagel on the First Sunday in Lent, 1995.*

The name put upon him at his baptism was Son of God, Suffering Servant, and with that name at his baptism what was his to do. The voice from heaven spoke words from Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42. "Son of God" was used of the people of Israel, and of the people of Israel as gathered up in their king. The Davidic title "Son of God" is put upon him at his Baptism, which is as his anointing to kingship. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." "Beloved" and "with whom I am well pleased" are what was said in Isaiah of that Son of God, that servant of God (עֶבֶד יְהוָה), both Son and servant, as we heard again at his Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah speaking of the death he would accomplish. Of him we are told that he will make himself a sacrifice for sin. He will make many to be accounted righteous, for he will bear their iniquities. Such is the Son/servant of God, the king who stands for his people, the Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The next thing that Matthew tells us:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

And the last words from the mouth of God to him, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," are the words upon which the tempter casts doubt. "If you are the Son of

God . . . ." As at the first temptation, which involved us all: "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the Garden?'" Doesn't he want you to have food? Doesn't he want what is good for you? Doesn't he love you? So take it. Eve did, and with her sin, her unbelief, she brought all her children into bondage from which, try as they may, they never can get free, and all their ways of trying to bring them deeper into the opposite of freedom, however many styles of fig leaves they may try. At Jesus' temptation, when everything of what's with us hangs on him, Jesus did not sin. The words of God come first and are sure. "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" His victory was not with some zap-pow-blast, but in the strength of the words of the Lord, the same as have been given to you too.

If he was Davidic king, was not his power his to use for feeding himself? David, you recall, helped himself to all sorts of things. Not such a king, not such a Son, not such a servant of God was Jesus. His baptism set him on his way to the cross. Not by an exercise of power is he a king, but as the one who stands for us all, he bears our sins and answers for them. He was free to bear the sins of others, for he was in bondage to none of his own. "He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Jesus was tempted to slip away from the words of God, away from the way of the cross, into the bondage and slaveries of power. For him to grasp power as the way of his being servant/Son/king would make the bad news that that is indeed the way everything goes, even God too. Those who go for a big power god, that's the God they get. The ways of power are coercion and necessity. Jesus was come to set us free. No whip, no rope, no slaves. Necessity and coercion are not the ways that God wants to deal with us. They are not his saving way with us in Jesus.

Dostoyevsky has the Grand Inquisitor say to Jesus, "Thou didst not know that when man rejects miracles he rejects God too." There are many people, we know, who reject miracles, and rejecting miracles they reject God too. We ourselves fall into their bondage if in response to this the first thing we do is to try to prove some miracles. As if then we would have proven God. The only God we might then have proven would be a God who does miracles. There are loads and loads of gods like that around. There's only one of the Calvary kind.

The Grand Inquisitor continues: Man seeks not so much God as the miraculous. And as man cannot bear to be without the miraculous, he will create new miracles of his own for himself. Thou didst not come down from the cross, when they shouted to thee, mocking and reviling thee: "Come down from the cross and we will believe that thou art he." At his temptation Jesus turned away from miracles as the way for him to go, and when he healed in response to pleaded need, he so often told them not to tell any one about it. Those who come to him because of miracles might better stay at home with the gods they already have, gods who are kept as gods only as long as they produce the desired felt need—miracles. And if you go to church and the god who is being promoted there is this miracle worker one, what hope is there there?

At Calvary, Satan says the same again, as also earlier through Peter. "If you are the Son of God, come down from the

christology in a logical order of dependency, not in a chronological order so that one moves from one to another. Where sanctification's dependency on Christ for its content is lost, it is nothing else but sheer moralism. Lutheranism becomes a sacramentalized Calvinism. In Germany the distinctions between the two traditions is already lost. Rationalism's denial of supernatural truth was rooted in Pietism's doctrinal indifference associated with its concentration on sanctification. Consider that today a Bible-based conservative Protestantism with a faulty view of sanctification can offer no united protest against the ordination of women pastors. Women clergy display Christian virtues and leadership skills and fulfill all the criteria of a quantifiable definition of sanctification.

In finding the basis of Christian truth in a quantitatively understood definition of sanctification, conservative and liberal forms of Protestantism often arrive at the same conclusions. In no case is sanctification the doctrinal touchstone. Koeberle's *Quest for Holiness* still serves in making clear the Lutheran distinction between justification and sanctification. His book is just as contemporary now as when it first appeared. In the original German, Koeberle's classic bore the title *Justification and Sanctification*, which describes its contents. The *Quest for Holiness* describes the continued condition of the readers who will benefit from it.

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## THE LAW IN CHRISTIAN SANCTIFICATION

*The following seven theses are proposed in light of the Pauline corpus by the Reverend Dr. Paul R. Raabe, exegetical professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. The translations of Scripture are the author's own.*

I. The law as seen in the second table of the Decalog continues to express God's will for the horizontal life and conduct of all people, including Christians.

*Evidence:* "So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (Rom 7:12). The example Paul uses is the Ninth-Tenth Commandment: "You shall not covet" (7:7); "For we know that the law is spiritual" (Rom 7:14). "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but keeping the commandments of God" (1 Cor 7:19).

II. Only Christians can "agree with the law," "delight in the law," "submit to the law."

*Evidence:* "I agree with the law, that it is good" (Rom 7:16). "For I delight in the law of God according to the inner self" (Rom 7:22); that this phrase refers to the new creature in Christ is evident from 2 Corinthians 4:16 and Ephesians 3:16; contrast Romans 6:6. "So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind" (Rom 7:25). "For the mind of the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to the law of God, for it is unable. And those who are in the flesh are unable to please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if, as is the case, the Spirit of God dwells in you" (Rom 8:7–9).

III. The law is powerless to produce obedience also for the Christian.

*Evidence:* Rom 7: 14–25. The interpretation of Rom 7:14–25 is much debated. Although still the minority viewpoint, the interpretation that understands Paul to be referring to himself as a Christian in these verses has recently been defended by Michael P. Middendorf, *The "I" in the Storm: Paul's Use of the First Person Singular in Romans 7* (Th.D. dissertation; Concordia Seminary, 1990); Michael Winger, *By What Law? The Meaning of Nomos in the Letters of Paul*, SBL Dissertation Series 128 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992): 159–196.

IV. The law continues to expose and condemn the works of the flesh.

*Evidence:* "with the flesh I serve the law of sin" (Rom 7:25). "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these oppose each other so that you do not do the things you want to do" (Gal 5:17). "The works of the flesh are plain . . ." (Gal 5:19–21).

V. The law does not accuse the fruit of the Spirit.

*Evidence:* "But the fruit that the Spirit produces is love, joy . . . . Against such there is no law" (Gal 5:22–23).

VI. The law as the continuing expression of God's will for human life and conduct is fulfilled in Christians by the Spirit.

*Evidence:* "In order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:4). "Owe no one anything except to love one another; for the one who loves the other person has fulfilled the law. For 'you shall not commit adultery,' 'you shall not kill,' 'you shall not steal,' 'you shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are summed up in this statement, 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love toward the neighbor does no harm; therefore love fulfills the law" (Rom 13:8–10).

VII. Christians are freed from the entire law, and yet they fulfill the whole law by the Spirit.

Note: On this twofold perspective toward the law, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); In-Gyu Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 81 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

*Evidence:* "Unto freedom Christ has freed us . . . . I testify again to everyone who receives circumcision that he is obligated to *do the entire law*. You have been severed from Christ, you who would be justified in law; you have fallen away from grace. . . . For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith at work through love" (Gal 5:1–6). "For *the whole law is fulfilled* in one statement, 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself. . . . But I say, walk by the Spirit and do not complete the desire of the flesh'" (Gal 5:14–16). "To those under the law I became as one under the law, *though not being myself under the law*. . . . to those without the law I became as one without the law, though not being without the law of God but in the law of Christ" (1 Cor 9:20–21).

*Conclusion:* In Pauline theology the law is allied with sin. Just as the gospel of Jesus Christ frees one from the bondage of sin (Rom 6:7, 11, 18, 22), so it also frees one from the dominion and curse of the law (Rom 7:4, 6; 8:2). But, unlike sin, there is more to say about the law. This “more” is what Lutherans try to express with the category of “the third use of the law.” The law is the law of God. Therefore it was *and still is* “holy and just and good” (Rom 7:12; see also 14); it continues to express God’s will for human life, including the life of Christians. That love toward the neighbor “fulfills the law” implies that the second table of the Decalog remains God’s will for the horizontal relationship of Christians toward others. It does not mean that “love” replaces the law or renders the law superfluous. “Love” does not define itself; its contours receive clarification from the written law. Love does not contradict the second table, and the commandments dealing with horizontal relationships depict in their essence the workings of love.

A good way to explain “the third use of the law” is by focusing on the Christians’ response to the law. Sinners respond to the law by being coerced into obeying it externally and by being contrite (or hardened) because it accuses them. Because Christians remain sinners, they still respond in these two ways; it still functions to coerce and accuse. But only Christians delight in the law’s good instructions and fulfill it by the Spirit. Yet when they examine their own conduct in light of its standards, they can only regret their own fleshly failures (although not the fruit that the Spirit produces in and through them).

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## FALSEHOOD, VIOLENCE . . . AND MOTHER’S DAY

*This sermon was preached at Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Niagara Falls, Ontario, on Mother’s Day, 1995. It is based on the Gospel of St. John 13:31–35.*

Speaking from his heart, our Lord calls us “little children,” but little children are an endangered species. If those who bombed the Federal Building in Oklahoma are put to death by the methods used to abort babies, there will be an outcry against cruel and unusual punishment. We shudder at times gone by when criminals were broken on the wheel, but we pay taxes so that third-trimester babies can be put away by “dilation and curettage,” that is, torn apart limb by limb without even an anesthetic.

We are shocked at the memory of witches and heretics being burned at the stake, but we sleep softly in our beds when babies who could survive outside the womb are burned alive in saline solution so that they can’t inconvenience someone’s lifestyle. Sufferers from Parkinson’s disease are being treated with the brain tissue of aborted babies. I just heard a spokeswoman for Lutherans For Life describe how babies’ heads are positioned in the birth canal to have a hole drilled in them and the brain suctioned out while they are still alive. Even the Nuremberg war criminals were spared such treatment.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn says that falsehood and violence go hand in hand. If you don’t accept that each person is made in the image of God and therefore endowed with certain rights which no government may take away, you have started down a slippery slope which can only end in hell on earth. By the same token, love proceeds from truth as surely as night follows day. In the person and work of Jesus, God and man, we cannot say where truth ends and love begins, because he is the perfect embodiment of both love and truth. He went into and out from death so that we might have life and have it abundantly, and his heart grieves that we have become so indifferent to the way in which death is being casually dished out to the defenseless. Euthanasia looms around the corner, and there are those who praise the killing of the handicapped. It’s hypocritical to condemn Hitler with one breath and to adopt his program in the next.

There are more important questions than which party can reduce the provincial deficit and which leader can put Ontario back to work. Is man just an animal with an appetite which eats and drinks and parties for a while and then is no more? Or have we been dignified with the image of God, and have we been rescued from squalor and disgrace by God taking our nature upon him to die and rise again as our Saviour? Is it fine and dandy for us to behave like wild beasts in a fallen world, or are we called to love as we have been loved? Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel of God’s truth and love in his Son become man!

Jesus is a Son twice over and hence a member of two families. The blessed Trinity is the most perfect of families, and our Lord brought this family down to earth by being born of a virgin mother. Thank God St. Mary didn’t think he was just an impersonal blob of fetal matter of which she could dispose as she pleased! Jesus was lovingly received and nurtured by his mother so that he might clasp cold, unwanted orphans to his glowing, tender breast in the family of the church. In this church we are to let ourselves be loved by him, and we are to love each other, to receive each other as precious gifts from God, to honor each other as creatures made and remade in the image of God.

Even if you have in some way been a guilty party in the abortion catastrophe, you are to let yourself be loved by Jesus in his church. He became a Son twice over to atone for real sin and to forgive real sinners. On the evening of the first Easter day he instituted holy Absolution so that his ministers here on earth might do what psychology and all other human forms of therapy can never do. In complete privacy and confidentiality, sinners may tell all and receive a personal pardon valid for eternity. If abortionists and their sympathizers don’t repent, they face a fearful judgment; if they do repent, the love of God is stronger than all the evil-doing of which fallen man is capable.

Princess Anne once described pregnancy as an “occupational hazard” which goes along with being a wife. One of our pastors in England was recently visited by a Polish survivor of the Auschwitz death camp who is still tormented by his memory of the smell of burning human flesh in his nostrils twenty-four hours a day as he labored in the shadow of the crematoria. The tragedy went on in the Gulag Archipelago, and it continues in one way or another on every continent. The holocaust in our hospitals wounds Jesus’ holy heart, and it causes the Princess Royal’s attempt at humor to fall flat.

cross.” At the consummation of his saving work for us, and at its beginning, Jesus does not come down from the cross, because he is the Son/servant of God. At his baptism he is already put to that, and at his temptation he holds himself toward the cross. Can a man be as free as that? Jesus is, and on him the Father’s pleasure. Him Jesus will not misrepresent or deny by making him a god in the manner of natural religion, a power god who is there for doing miracles for us, a slave-owner god, with slaves “overawed by his might” (Dostoyevsky).

Religion comes in the next temptation, what Dostoyevsky calls mystery; and what could be more religious than the Temple and its pinnacle? Now, the devil knows how to behave himself when he is in church. A telling word of Scripture would be just the thing that’s called for. He has one, but snipped about a bit to fit his purpose. No captive is more delicious to his taste than one that he captures by using the words and the name of God. Verbal inspiration is not his primary problem. “The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose,” says Shakespeare, and “every heretic,” says Tertullian. If you are the Son of God, then show me how much you can trust him. “Throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will give his angels charge of you,’ and, ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” You can trust his promises, can’t you? Satan certainly sometimes sounds like a reasonably good Lutheran, doesn’t he?

Jesus sees it straight because he says God’s words straight. There may not be any tempting of God, whistling him up for a miracle, or all those more subtle ways we try to get in on God’s power and pull it to our program and purposes, even very good purposes perhaps, but yet with us getting control of God, or some control, binding him, which is the native meaning of the word “religion.” Dirty word. Just think of the big splash religious movements, and some of them simply dripping with the words and name of God, that point to one kind of spectacular or another, to demonstrate that they are really in on God; and some certainly do the mystery, the religion bit better than others, as Tertullian observed. Jesus, who refused to do a spectacular in the Temple, could not thus be taken captive there.

A few years ago it was quite the thing to say you won’t find Jesus here in church, he is out there in the world, doing what people need to have done for them there, that’s the real Jesus. Satan seems to follow something of this same line of thought.

The devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” You can be king of the lot, Jesus. All the power that’s mine I’ll put at your disposal. The two of us together can hardly fail, if you’ll only do things a bit more my way. Some years ago there was a sociologist who said to the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, “You’ve got all that great Bible stuff, and now if you’ll just make a few adjustments, not very big ones (don’t let the Lord’s Supper get in the way of your speedy growing the church with selected people), a few adjustments and then you too can strike it big.” The time when the church exercised big power in the world some call the Age of Faith. Try that out on Jesus of the Third Temptation, the Jesus who moves steadily to Calvary.

Satan’s sort of king is not the one who hangs on the cross, the one who holds at his temptation on his way to the cross, along that

way that we follow again with him this Lent, deeply rejoicing in what he does for us, what is only his to do, all his doing that counts for us, by which we come to be given forgiveness and righteousness. “By one man’s obedience many will be made righteous.” His, not mine. Such a Saviour—who could have dreamt it? Only God, who doesn’t have to prove he’s God, does it so hidden, so human, so weak, so hungry, so declining to make it power big in the church or the world. His the cross. That’s the way he does it.

One expectation of Messiah was that he would be inviolate, nothing could hurt him, not even a fall from the pinnacle of the temple. Now there’s a sensible sort of Christ, and Satan rides along on our natural way of projecting God and getting maximum mileage with our religion. No wonder they had no use for a man who got himself crucified. Never such a way of being a king before, of being God’s Son, suffering servant, of being Christ, of being Saviour, of being Jesus, for you, even to his body broken, his blood shed, “for you.” Amen.

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## ALTERNATIVE WORSHIP

*The following is a portion of Frank Senn’s timely exposé in the May 1995 issue of Worship, pages 194–224. Senn is the pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Evanston, Illinois, and is the president of The Liturgical Conference.*

In an effort to appeal to the unchurched, congregations within mainline denominations have begun offering “alternative worship services,” sometimes also called “contemporary services” to distinguish them from “traditional liturgies.” Such “alternative services” may feature lite rock combos, on-stage dramatizations by church players, testimonials from celebrities, and upbeat messages which draw on the insights of popular psychological theories. Advice given in church-growth seminars on “worship that attracts and holds the unchurched” includes such admonitions as “make it user-friendly,” “keep it simple,” let it be “from the heart,” cultivate informality, maintain a hospitable atmosphere, give a positive message, keep the music up-beat, and exercise quality control. Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and even some Episcopal congregations have provided options for such “alternative worship” as well as “traditional worship” on the Sunday morning menu (sometimes two services being held simultaneously in different spaces).

It is not surprising that a market-oriented approach to the Church’s life and mission (aiming specifically at “baby boomers” and now also at “baby busters”) would emulate the shopping mall with its varied choices. It is also not surprising that this atmosphere has encouraged a great deal of liturgical entrepreneurship, with megachurches sponsoring “how to do it [like us]” seminars and publishers providing “celebration kits” and “Worship Alive!” resources.

In spite of its seemingly anti-liturgical stance, there is a whole liturgical movement going on in the church-growth movement which is oriented toward “reaching the unchurched” on their own terms. Promoters of church growth are absolutely convinced that dynamic, corporate worship is the key to successful evangelism.



The serious membership hemorrhaging that has occurred in the mainline churches over the last twenty-five years has prompted denominational staffs to encourage the implementation of the principles of church growth in their congregations. A worship style, quite “ecumenical” in its own terms, has evolved from these principles. Yet while this kind of worship is called “alternative” or “contemporary,” it has not emerged *ex nihilo*. The task of this article is to explore its historical roots, analyze its cultural context and appeal, and probe the challenge that it raises for orthodox Christian worship and confessional theology.

Since the use of contemporary popular music characterizes most “alternative worship services,” the celebrants and devotees of such worship may not have discerned that it stands in a tradition at least two centuries old. The ethos, if not the form, of this “alternative worship” is found in the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. Especially in Lutheran and Reformed Churches, there was a pietistic reaction to the perceived “sterility” of orthodox church life which sought to “convert the outward orthodox confession into an inner, living theology of the heart.” The orthodox reaction to pietism was probably overly caustic; on the other hand, examples of actual orthodox church life, such as in Leipzig during the music directorship of Johann Sebastian Bach (1723–1750), show such church life to be far from sterile.

Pietism had no liturgical program of its own. Its aim was to inject some “heart” into the church orders authorized for use and to deepen the personal religious life. However, hymnwriting for worship and devotion was an ongoing activity in Lutheran Churches, and hymns around the beginning of the eighteenth century reflected the more subjectivistic faith of pietism, as well as pietism’s stress on sanctification. Indeed, the pietistic movement gave a new impetus to hymnwriting and congregational song that even secured a place in the worship of the German Reformed Church around the beginning of the eighteenth century through influence of the Lower Rhenish poets Joachim Neander (e.g., “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”) and Gerhard Tersteegen (e.g., “God Himself Is Present”). New hymnbooks reflected the emphases of pietism, arranging their anthologies according to the “order of salvation” rather than the church year. New tunes were composed for the new lyrics, which had a more sentimental quality than the old chorale tunes. Even the syncopated rhythms of the old chorales were “smoothed out” to even note values. The lyrics and the lyrical musical qualities popular in “alternative worship” reflect the warm Jesus-mysticism of pietist hymns, though hardly with the same theological depth.

But nothing under pietism could match the assault on the liturgy that occurred under the influence of rationalism. The Enlightenment held that the chief function of worship was “edification.” This was an emphasis on which both pietism and rationalism agreed (and against which J. S. Bach stood with his old-fashioned notion that worship is rendered *solī Deo gloria*). Everything that “edified” was kept; everything else had to be revised or abolished. To “edify” meant to induce feelings of reverence. Simplicity was the order of the day. Church music accordingly underwent a thorough revolution in which the simpler homophonic harmonies, but quasi-operatic oratorios of G. F. Handel served as more of a model than the complex contrapuntal structures and chorale-based cantatas and organ works of J. S. Bach.

Preaching, too, had to have a practical purpose. Whatever did not teach a practical moral lesson could be dismissed, for the way the pastor could make himself useful was, for example, “by helping the farmer to follow a better plan of life, by replacing superstitious quack medicines with truly effective remedies, and by giving prompt aid to those suffering from external lesions and wounds.” The pastor, as an educated person, had a responsibility to help simple people deal better with the needs of everyday life. Immanuel Kant denied that prayer, church-going, and the sacraments were “means of grace,” and suggested that clergymen dominated the hearts of others by attaching to themselves exclusive possession of the so-called means of grace. But he found the sacraments useful in social terms in that baptism is “the ceremonial initiation, taking place but once, into the church . . . community” and Holy Communion is “The oft-repeated ceremony . . . of a renewal, continuation, and propagation of this churchly community under laws of equality.” If the sacraments had any efficacy, it was understood in terms of natural rather than supernatural purposes.

In the religion of the Enlightenment, we are already dealing with the desiderata of the church-growth movement: concerns for simplicity, authenticity (worship which is “more from the heart”), singable music, and practical preaching, although informality is not something one would associate with the German *Aufklärung*. But it is something one would associate with revivalism. In spite of some differences in theological emphases, the kind of worship fostered by revivalism was in line with the principles of worship championed in the Enlightenment under both pietism and rationalism: it was oriented toward human ends; it was a tool used to accomplish sanctification (pietism), edification (rationalism), or conversion (revivalism) rather than an offering “to the glory of God alone.”

It should be noted that bringing the forms and styles of revivalism into the mainline churches is not new. Even Lutherans in America have flirted with revival practices. Most Lutheran immigrants to North America were imbued with a pietistic spirituality and had their own Jesus-songs which matched those of revivalism (e.g., “Beautiful Savior”). Having brought to North America also their own spiritual folk songs (especially the Scandinavian Lutherans), they resonate with the folk character of the songs popularly sung in “alternative worship services.” For several decades John Ylvisaker has been providing American Lutherans with their own spiritual folk songs.

“American Lutherans” (as they were called in the mid-nineteenth century) were also influenced by evangelical revivalism. Their leader, Samuel Simon Schmucker (1799–1873), believed that the practices of revivalism could be incorporated into Lutheran services. They were, including the singing of revival songs, a breakdown of liturgical order and (especially in Pennsylvania) a strong commitment to the abolition and temperance movements (which Finney also supported). Those partisans of confessional revival in the mid-nineteenth century who were opposed to Schmucker, such as Charles Porterfield Krauth (1823–1883), came to see that forms of worship were not incidental to confessional theology. They instinctively realized that revivalistic worship supported a theology that was opposed to Lutheran confessional theology. They embraced the romantic liturgical restoration movement as that eventuated in the compilation of the “Common Ser-

vice” and in the recovery of church hymns. But while the “church songs” were sung in the liturgy, the revival songs continued to be sung downstairs in the Sunday School. The result is that Lutheranism in America has been a church with confessions and an ordered liturgy, but these have not served to form spirituality, so that liturgical worship and popular devotion have often been at odds with each other in American Lutheran church life.

### *Priestly Formation—The Life of Stewardship*

About two decades ago, at the beginning of the seventieth decade of our century, something began to happen to the churches that has become the preoccupation of most denominations for the past decade. What happened was that church attendance began to decline, membership losses were experienced by all mainline denominations, including the conservative denominations which, while still growing, began to experience a decline in the number of new members.

With the help of sociologists an entire new industry was created to research the reasons for the decline and to discover ways to “make the church grow.” The decline in financial support at the denominational level in no small way provided some of the impetus for this new religious industry. Over the past decade a new research report has been issued about every six months. On a regular basis new books are written to offer helps to congregations to grow. The suggestions range from “entertainment evangelism” in the Sunday morning “gathering” to “market research to identify the felt needs of people.”

The research that concentrated on those who are “dropouts” from the church indicates that those who drop out are responding to forces external to the church. Most of them are not angry or disillusioned. They simply find life without the church attractive and relatively self-fulfilling. To put it another way, their “felt needs” are being satisfied without God and without the church.

In my address to the Orientation and Planning conference in July, I tried to help identify some of the forces and powers that shape the lives of people in our society and culture. I mentioned the prevalence of the idea that there is no external truth, or meaning. That each individual creates his/her own meaning by the choices he/she makes, and that the “right to choose” is the only absolute that is recognized. We are told that there is no absolute right or wrong; there is only the “inner” personal emotive conviction that determines right and wrong for each individual. The question “What does this mean?” has been replaced by “How do you feel about this?” or “What does this mean *to you*?” The focus of most political activity is on “individual rights,” which are defined by each individual or special interest group for itself, without any external objective basis by which to determine right from wrong. Rights thus finally become whatever the individual or group chooses to define as its rights and is able to enact into law.

Robert Jensen maintains that this sets the stage for a slide into fascism. Fascism is the reduction of all human relations to (partisan) politics and the reduction of politics to power. The rules by which society lives have no real basis in right and wrong. We are free to make up our own rules that suit our own will to power.

The autonomous (a law to oneself) individual has become sovereign. This individualism turns the church into a mere organization that speaks of Christian principles and Christian ideal-

ism. It leads church members to think that their personal peace of mind on Sunday morning is the reason for the church’s being. They want a “feel-good” theology of worship, therapeutic sermons to enable them to “get in touch with themselves,” and the freedom to determine their own relationship to God.

Within the church a false understanding of the spiritual priesthood of all believers has contributed to this. “Nobody is going to stand between me and my relationship to my God.” This is the religious version of the autonomous individual. “Nobody has the right to tell me that I may not use my gifts to serve God in any way that I choose!” The virus that infects the secular culture also infects the people who are members of the church.

“You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,” is the suggestion of the Tempter. The original sin is the desire to be as gods. We are born with this inchoate desire. It is our Adamic nature. We are also born with a Satanic counterfeit image of what God is like. When the biblical teaching of the spiritual priesthood of the believers is interpreted in such a manner that each individual becomes his or her own priest, we have fallen into the snare and trap that the evil one sets. We have been called into a community, a holy priestly people, not for our own sake, but for the sake of the world. If we are to fulfill our calling as the royal priesthood, we need to move away from the individualistic self-interest about getting into heaven and understand the plan and purpose of God in our election and call.

### *A Pilgrim People*

The election and call of Abraham is the basis for speaking about our own election and call as a priestly people. “Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed’” (Gn 12:1–3).

Abraham left his father’s home, his own country, and became a pilgrim, a temporary resident in the land to which God brought him. He, his son Isaac, and Jacob, his grandson, lived in tents; they were sojourners in the land. “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents . . . for he looked for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:9–10).

In the same way the people of Israel lived in the wilderness as a pilgrim people. The decisive event that made then the holy nation, the people (λαός) of God, was their baptism “into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor 10:2). Here in the wilderness they were dependent in a special way on God’s care and leading. “He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you . . . that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone but by everything which proceeds from the mouth of God” (Dt 8:3). They were, in the words of Stanley Hauerwas, a “resident colony of aliens.” Their pilgrimage was characterized by the rhythm and time of their days. “At the command of the Lord the people of Israel set out, and at the command of the Lord they encamped” (Nm 9:18).

As Israel was baptized into Moses and so began their journey, so we are born anew into a pilgrim people, become citizens of the colony of heaven, temporary residents of this world in the

waters of our baptism. We are baptized into Christ. Any discussion of our mission and stewardship must begin with the understanding of our nature as a pilgrim people. We are temporary residents. In the words of 1 Peter 1:2, we are “exiles . . . chosen by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood.”

The sacraments make us a community, a people, and move us away from the individualistic autonomy. The sacraments are a continuous sign of our nature as a pilgrim people, and of the fact that on our journey we are totally dependent upon God’s care and providing. The sacraments also nurture and sustain our faith in that providence and care.

The word “sacrament” comes from the Latin word *sacramentum*, which was the soldier’s oath of allegiance. In the early church the word originally was used to emphasize God’s oath of allegiance to us. We may find it strange to speak of God’s oath by which he swears allegiance to us, but the sacred Scriptures do not. Thus Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, leads us to sing of the allegiance of God to his people, “to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father, Abraham” (Lk 2:72–73). The letter to the Hebrews also instructs us concerning God’s oath of allegiance: “For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself . . . so when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath” (Heb 6:13, 17). In the first six books of the Bible, thirty-six separate passages refer to God’s oath to Abraham and to the people of Israel.

As a pilgrim people, temporary residents on a journey that began at our baptism, our stewardship depends on the trust we have in the promises of God. When faith falters, the sacraments direct us to God’s oath of allegiance. This is the oath of the covenant God has established with us through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. In baptism the name that is named, “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” is the oath sealed with the water of baptism. We are baptized into Christ. Trust in the promise given in Holy Baptism leads to that daily renewal of which Luther speaks, “That the old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die, together with all sins and evil lusts . . .” (SC IV, 12).

As at the baptism of Jesus, the voice from heaven spoke, “You are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased” (Mk 1:11), so the voice from heaven speaks at our baptism, for we are baptized into Christ. “You are my beloved . . . with you I am well pleased.” We are born anew into the pilgrim people “chosen and destined by God the *Father* and sanctified by the *Spirit* for obedience to *Jesus Christ* and for sprinkling with his blood.”

As sojourners and pilgrims, we eat the meal of the pilgrim people, Holy Communion. This is more than manna in the wilderness. This is the meal of the covenant in which God swears his allegiance to us. “This is my blood of the new covenant, for the forgiveness of sins.” We eat and drink and God remembers his covenant, sealed in the blood of Christ, and acts in faithfulness to his promise. This sacrament also is not an activity of the individual, where all come to eat by themselves, like so many diners at a religious restaurant. This is the covenant meal of the pilgrim people. As only the children of Israel ate the

Passover, the ancient meal of the people of God, so only the baptized eat and drink in this meal.

The priestly stewardship life is rooted in these *sacramenta* in which God swears his allegiance to us. Stewardship is rooted in the faith that understands that we are a pilgrim people, and trusts that God will care for and provide for our journey through the wilderness. Therefore faith enables us to live without a claim to anything, since everything comes from God in his mercy and grace.

### *A People Who Have Been Called Out*

“But you are a chosen race.” The words *call* and *election* or *choice* are used synonymously in Scripture. Underlying the divine election and choice of a people of his own is the divine plan that God has, and that he seeks to carry out through the people whom he has chosen as his own. God has a plan that St. Paul proclaims to us: “that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, things in heaven and on earth—in Him” (Eph 1:10). Our entire life as the chosen people of God is conditioned by that divine plan. God chose Israel to be his people, the people through whom he would carry out his plan. He called them out of Egypt, and by that call elected and chose them (Ho 11:1; Mt 2:15).

They were set in the midst of the world, at the center, for the sake of the world. To them he entrusted his revelation. No other people had anything like this. They had no claim of achievement on which to base their election and choice. “Not because you were more in numbers than any other people” (Dt 7:7). Everything depended upon God’s mercy and grace. When they came to their own land, following the harvest, they were to bring the firstfruits and the tithe to the priest. “And you shall make a response before the Lord your God, ‘A wandering Aramean was my father.’” After having brought the tithe and giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, “you shall say, ‘I have removed the sacred portion out of my house . . . according to all thy commandment’” (Dt 7:13–14).

The election and choosing of God rests entirely on God’s mercy. It changes the people’s relationship to God, but also to the world around them. The people are a holy priesthood for the sake of the world (Ex 19:6). God did not choose them in order to isolate them in a sheltered existence where they could keep their goods for themselves alone.

God’s call is not only *from* something, but *to* something. Stewardship and priesthood imply that one has received something sacred to administer in such a way that others may benefit from it. Israel is chosen for the sake of the world. They exist as a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that through this one people God could redeem all people. This is the stewardship task entrusted to Israel. They are set at the center.

To meet Abraham required a decision concerning Abraham—a decision that could bring either a blessing or a curse: “I will bless him who blesses you, and I will curse him who curses you” (Gn 12:3). What is confirmed with an oath to Abraham is also confirmed about the people of Israel and the new Israel of God, the holy priesthood. God’s people can never be content to live as a tolerated minority on the edge of life. They are placed in the center of the world. The world depends on them, not only for eternal salvation, but for its continued existence. Their presence in



the world requires a decision from those who meet them. As with Abraham, that decision brings either a blessing or a curse.

The covenant God has made with his people prescribes a priestly function that they are to fulfill for the sake of all people. They are baptized into Christ Jesus, who is “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel” (Lk 2:32). The holy nation of priests is also “the light of the world” (Mt 5:14). This descriptive word of Jesus follows immediately after the Beatitudes. The blessing received by those who are chosen by Jesus is given for the sake of the world. They are entrusted with and given charge of holy things to be administered for the sake of the world. They are blessed by God in order that they might be a blessing.

#### *A Royal Priesthood*

“Come to that living stone . . . chosen by God and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 2:4–5). Jesus is called the living stone, “chosen by God and precious.” He is the chief priest, the chief steward over the house of God (Heb 3:1–2, 6). We too have been chosen by God as living stones, precious in His sight. Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, is a faithful steward in the house of God. He exercised a faithful stewardship over what had been entrusted to him, God’s eternal plan of salvation. In his self-offering and priestly sacrifice he fulfilled his own stewardship.

The congregation is that spiritual house, built of living stones, a holy priesthood to offer sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. We are to serve as God’s priestly people for the salvation of others. We are a priestly people, ordained to God’s service, fully deputized by him over against all other people. As the holy priesthood we have a responsibility before the world to offer spiritual sacrifices. The sacrifice of Christ and his permanent intercession (Heb 7:17, 24; Rom 8:3–4; Rev 5:6) make it possible for those who are united with him in faith to carry out their priestly stewardship.

Strictly speaking, a sacrifice is simply a gift given to a deity. To sacrifice is to bring God a gift, a present. The good works of Christian people are authentic sacrifices. Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn wrote, “This is not merely Lutheran doctrine, it is Biblical doctrine as well.” In Romans 15:16, St. Paul asserts that grace was given to him by God “in order that I might be a priest of Jesus Christ to the nations, ministering the Gospel of God in priestly fashion, so that the sacrifice of the nations might be acceptable, being made holy by the Holy Spirit.”

The word rendered “priest” in this passage is λειτουργός, from the same root that occurs in our word *liturgy*. It designates the officiating priest at a public sacrifice. The word rendered “ministering in priestly fashion” is ἱεουργεῖν, “to perform sacred rites, to sacrifice.” The word rendered “sacrifice” is προσφορά, “the presenting or sacrifice of something.” When the *Apologetics of the Augsburg Confession* quotes this passage (XXIV, 34) it renders it, “I sacrifice the gospel of God, that the oblation of the nations might become acceptable, sanctified by the holy Spirit, that is, that the nations might be sacrificial victims acceptable to God through faith, etc.”

Foremost then in the stewardship of our priestly responsibility is the administration of our station in life with the intent and

purpose that the unbelieving might be brought to God as a gift. This is not an ingenious method to produce clergy-helpers in the work of the congregation, not a program for activating people for churchly tasks, or “involving the laity.” The stewardship of all of life is the priestly sacrifice to be offered to God. The whole of life is to be governed by the stewardship of the priestly calling given in baptism. “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples on the face of the earth” (Dt 7:6). The motive for faithfulness in the stewardship is “because the Lord set his love upon you . . . and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers” (Dt 7:7–8).

The firstfruits of our labor and our offerings of money are brought as stewardship of our priestly calling. They are offered to God “in the priestly service of the gospel” that the unbelievers may be acceptable to God, having been made holy by the Holy Spirit. These gifts are to be offered to God with the response before the Lord your God, “Behold, I now bring of the fruit of the ground, which thou, O Lord, hast given me . . . I have removed the sacred portion out of my house” (Dt 26:10, 13).

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## REPORT: FORWARD IN FAITH

*Report on Anglican-Lutheran relations and the 1995 National Assembly of Forward in Faith.*

*By Jonathan Naumann, London, England.*

When numerous Lutheran representatives from three Scandinavian nations, meeting in London October 6 and 7, 1995, drew closer to sharing a common ecclesial life with their Anglican counterparts in England, it was not because of the Porvoo Declaration. For those who gathered for the second annual Forward in Faith National Assembly were not typical members of the established churches of their respective countries.

Some, like the Dean and priests of Strandebarrow, Norway, recently expelled from the Church of Norway for opposing abortion and other aspects of secularism in the church, attended as those who were already feeling the fury of a woman bishop scorned. What they found in England was an affectionate reception from those in the Church of England who are already feeling similar pressures from those who have seized power in Britain’s established church. Both a remnant and a force to be reckoned with, confessional Lutherans and conservative Anglicans are resolved now to face a future that looks more oppressive by the minute.

Do not trust the establishment . . . act now while you have the strength, was the advice from Norwegian academic Dr. Roald Flemstad to Anglican delegates from around the country, representing over sixteen new Deaneries created by Anglicans of Forward in Faith, a London-based organization whose motto is a vision for unity and truth. Their chairman, the Reverend John Broadhurst (who is also the new Dean of London), told the assembly, “The Lutherans know I am their friend,” despite his opposition to the Porvoo Declaration, which has negotiated inter-communion between the Lutherans (of the State churches



of the Nordic countries) and the established Church of England. Dismissing the Porvoo agreement as a distasteful Protestant union, Broadhurst lamented what he described as the collapse of the Reformation settlement in Scandinavia and the death of the Anglican mind in England. He urged that conscientious Anglicans continue to refrain from communion with heterodox members of their church as agreed at last year's assembly when the FIF Statement on Communion was overwhelmingly adopted. Conscientious Lutherans too are re-imposing closed Communion among their Scandinavian members in protest against false doctrine. False doctrine is a cancer that will destroy the church unless it is removed, urged Broadhurst with a vehemence that makes a refreshing change from the prevarication often associated with Anglican theology.

Out of the ashes of churches who have cremated their own integrity through endless capitulation to secular pressures, a new return to the faith of the undivided church and the restoration of order must arise. Conservative Lutherans and Anglicans, working together toward that end, was the theme of the assembly.

Among the resolutions passed by the delegates were:

- a resolution deploring the use of heterodox liturgical imagery that contradicts biblical language about the Godhead. Likewise contemporary Bible translations that fail accurately to render the Hebrew and Greek texts were condemned.
- a resolution affirming the acceptance of traditional and biblical morality, being sensitive to individual pastoral care. Nevertheless sensitivity should not be confused with laxity, nor used to confuse the faithful or to erode the Christian ethic.
- a resolution asserting that the faith and practice of the undivided church, and in particular the teaching of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, is normative . . . the Assembly urges the (FIF) Council, with the Provisional Episcopal Visitors (non-geographical flying bishops), to seek to recall the Church of England to its orthodox faith, and calls upon the Council to make common cause with other churches, western and eastern, in addressing this task.
- a resolution, if it becomes necessary, to establish an orthodox seminary or training course, at which orthodox ordinands may be trained.
- a resolution instructing the Council to take steps to ensure the consecration of bishops for our integrity (bishops who would not be appointed by the liberal establishment).

Concerning Lutherans, a resolution was made to ask Forward in Faith and the Free Synods of Norway and Sweden to pledge themselves to a process of convergence in the Faith and Order of the undivided church. A joint FIF and Lutheran coordinating committee was set up to provide support for orthodox ordination candidates, and for clergy seeking alternative posts, within the Westminster Group (the FIF alternative to the Porvoo Group). A resolution was also made concerning Archbishop Vanags of Latvia in support of his decision to stop the ordination of female pastors in his church. This Assembly expresses its wholehearted support for the Archbishop of Riga and deplores any attempts to isolate him or his church, either in the Lutheran or wider ecumenical fellowship, because of their decision in the matter of the ordination of women to the priesthood.

Thus what appeared to some as a common reaction against the ordination of women made considerable progress toward becoming the common synod initially envisioned, and which could, within five years, become a properly constituted church in its own right made up of members of both the Anglican and Lutheran traditions.

The presence of so many young people from Scandinavia proved that even after long years of attrition by liberal opponents holding all the power, orthodoxy continues to be embraced with enthusiasm by new generations. Even a new free faculty has been born within the campus of the University of Gothenburg.

What seems to be emerging, according to Fr. Geoffrey Kirk, one of the most eloquent spokesmen for the Cost of Conscience Anglican priests movement, is a new and satisfyingly biblical catholicism in northern Europe. It is an improvement over the geographical understanding of national catholic churches and finds itself happening on a truly catholic, non-geographical scale. From the Pacific coast of America to the to the Baltic States (and beyond), a pastoral arrangement for orthodox Christians is developing that transcends previous structures. It liberates people from national ties and gives them, within the church, a great experience of unity that they have never had since the Reformation. Understandings of episcopacy would naturally be new ones, too, although probably more biblical (was St. Paul only a national bishop?). Structural episcopacy would give way to better, more God-pleasing pastoral arrangements.

Such visions of the future, as well as such resolutions for the present, gave the 1995 National Assembly a glorious atmosphere of hope and joy. Conducted with efficiency as well as warmth, and punctuated with inspirational moments, such as the splendid concelebrated mass at which all the new Deans were commissioned, the Assembly was a welcome occasion in which to celebrate the corporate life of the Faith, during what would otherwise seem to be dark times for European Christianity.

## TEACHING THE KYRIE

*The Reverend Dr. Dale Meyer is the primary speaker for the Lutheran Hour and Third Vice President of the LCMS. He presented this paper at the July 1994 Real Life Worship Conference at Elm Grove, Wisconsin.*

Whatever position they're taking, thoughtful participants in current discussions about evangelism and liturgy are to be commended for striving to be faithful. To remain faithful to the revelation handed down from generation to generation and at the same time to be faithful to the Great Commission seem to be generally accepted by most within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Both demonstrations of faithfulness can also be judged selfless, outward looking. On the one hand, advocates of the historic liturgy look beyond the immediate present to the church's continuity with past and future generations of God's people. On the other hand, proponents of the less arcane, of so-called alternative or contemporary or blended worship forms have an eye upon those who are outside of God's people, sinners who are destined to perish unless they hear and believe the Gospel of Christ.

The following paper pauses from looking outward, be that through the lens of liturgy to the church of the ages or through worship designed to be user-friendly for outsiders, and looks inward. Who are we who gather each week for worship? I believe that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is not as sure of the answer as it once was. Ours is a church searching for its cultural identity. No longer sociologically distinct from our surrounding culture, we've found in the liturgy/evangelism discussion a place where our inherited self-understanding meets and conflicts with contemporary American culture.

### I.

"Our problems started when we stopped speaking German!" (or Slovak or Finnish or whatever your ancestral tongue). The quip contains some truth. Grandpa Meyer worshiped in German whenever possible. He once told me that when he attended English services he had to translate it into German before he really understood. He and Grandma raised their children to speak English, and one of those children, my father, married a girl from the Missouri Synod, and together they raised us to understand and speak only English.

There was, however, a Germanic overtone to our childhood. We understood expressions like *Schafskopf* and *wie geht's*, and we memorized "Stille Nacht." We didn't think much of it when people said, "Oh, you go to the German Lutheran Church?" Our elders were suspicious of Senator Kennedy's run for the White House, not so much because he was a Democrat but because he was Roman Catholic. Marrying outside the faith was rare, and always caused some *Bedenken*. We were Americans and Lutherans, but the German heritage was integrally woven into the ties that bound our family and church.

It seems so long ago, and it was. The German flavor of our life as a synod was destined to diminish and largely disappear. That's fine with me, but the change has removed one characteristic of our synodical fellowship. By and large, the self-awareness of the Missouri Synod is no longer connected with our ethnic heritage.

A second factor that has undermined our cultural identity is the electronic media. I recall that we got our first TV about 1953, an Admiral. It was not a surrogate parent like today's TV; it wasn't where I learned about life. That came from family, from church and school, and from my peers, non-Lutherans included. There was a homogeneity to those influences upon me. Little Dale was hearing messages from family, church, school, and friends that tended to reinforce one another.

This has also changed. My children are part of a generation where 98 percent of homes have at least one TV. The average set is turned on seven hours a day. 63 percent of American families often eat dinner while watching TV. The values of those who control TV's content do not agree with the values we teach in our churches and Lutheran schools. Whereas I as a child was influenced by a basically homogeneous attitudinal environment, our children today are growing up in a world with countless messages that are antithetical to each other and to the value systems taught by the church. The public doctrine of the Missouri Synod no longer has the quantitative impact upon our members that it had in years past.

At least we've got the Bible, right? No one among us is questioning our Reformation heritage of *sola Scriptura*? Well, yes and no. American culture thinks highly of the Bible. George H. Gallup Jr. found in 1993 that 81 percent of Americans regard the Bible as the literal and/or inspired Word of God. But when Gallup asked, "What is the most believable authority in matters of truth?" only 31 percent answered, "Scripture," while 43 percent answered with "personal experience." Most shocking was that 69 percent of Americans agreed when Gallup's poll said, "There are few moral absolutes." Other pollsters and other lines of questioning come up with similar results. Religious America today is much like 2 Timothy 3:3: "They will appear to have a godly life, but they will not let its power change them" (GWN).

One of the culprits here is higher criticism. Karlfried Froehlich related in the journal of Princeton Theological Seminary that "A woman said to me recently, 'I'm getting tired of those sermons which just repeat in cute language what I can read every-day in the paper. Is there nothing the Bible has to say other than this?'" The "strange silence of the Bible in the Church" (James D. Smart) has deeper roots. "The hermeneutical confusion of the last decade or so points to a deep insecurity vis-à-vis the normative Bible in church and schools" (*Ex Auditu*, vol. 1, 1983).

Ethnicity, media, and higher criticism are only three factors that I believe have contributed to a loss of cultural identity in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Note that I am speaking of the synod as a whole. Many individuals and many congregations know exactly who they are. I am also not implying that our self-understanding in the past was unrelated to our public confession. Our confession was sincere and true. The Reformation faith was part and parcel of who we understood ourselves to be. However, ethnicity, a relatively homogenous society, and fewer ravages from higher criticism were additional props to our self-identity. For most of the synod at the end of the twentieth century those extra supports are gone.

"We are—even the most religious of us—secular in ways our foremothers and forefathers were not. We do not live in a sacramental universe in which the things of this world, its joys and catastrophes, harvests and famines, births and deaths, are understood as connected to and permeated by divine power and love" (Sallie McFague quoted by Rosemary L. Bray, *New York Times Book Review*, March 3, 1993, p. 11).

This is a deeper issue than the transition from German liturgical worship to English liturgical services, which was troublesome enough in its day. This issue strikes at the root of how we perceive ourselves, our cultural identity showing itself in the way we worship. Liturgy and evangelism are about epistemology and communication. That is, the way we worship and the way we witness are symptomatic of whatever knowledge has so claimed us that we intentionally or unconsciously share it in our communications with others. The communication that happens in worship is now being openly debated because our epistemology has changed so drastically from previous generations. Many are uncomfortable with the discrepancy between traditional worship forms and our contemporary societal environment, while others are uncomfortable about accommodating the two. *Lex orandi lex credendi*. What is it that we in the Missouri Synod of the nineties really believe about God, society, and us?

## II.

An archaic, little-understood word sheds some light on our synod's identity problem: *mercy*. That's a word that doesn't communicate to people outside the sanctuary and probably doesn't mean much to people who worship regularly. My work as Lutheran Hour Speaker takes me into a different congregation almost every Sunday, many having so-called "alternative" or "contemporary" worship services. I don't recall a single one of these services that included the Kyrie or made any other significant use of the word *mercy*. It doesn't survive the "cut" in most "blended" services. That's understandable. The old word doesn't communicate the same content and context to modern ears that it once conveyed to biblical audiences.

Our popular understanding of the content of *mercy* is derived from Greco-Roman culture. Aristotle said that "pity (*eleos*) may be defined as a feeling of pain caused by the sight of some evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, and which we might expect to befall ourselves or some friend of ours, and moreover to befall us soon" (Rhet. II, 8, 385b). *Mercy* is a feeling that looks sadly upon another's undeserved misfortune. Bringing this cultural definition to worship, most worshipers will sing the Kyrie and imagine that they're asking God simply to look down and feel sorry for us, weak humans that we are, although we're probably not quite as wretched as the confession of sins describes us.

However, that culturally conditioned definition is far removed from the Bible's normative understanding of *mercy*. While Aristotle defined *mercy* as a feeling or an emotion, *mercy* in the Bible is one or more concrete acts of loving kindness. After the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah said, "But this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning" (Lam 3:21–23; New Oxford Annotated Bible). Notice the plural, which does not fit our western understanding of *mercy* as an emotion, for which the singular suffices. A hymn captures nicely the plurality of God's many deeds of loving kindness:

When all Thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys,  
Transported with the view, I'm lost  
In wonder, love, and praise.

(TLH, 31: 1)

Popular understanding also ignores the rich context of biblical *mercy*. *Mercy* in the Bible is a manifestation of the covenant relationship that God has established with his people. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great *mercy* he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pt 1:3). Having received *mercy* from God, we should extend God's *mercy* to others. That's an outreach that the wicked slave in Jesus' parable failed to perform. "Should you not have had *mercy* on your fellow slave, as I had *mercy* on you?" (Mt 18:33).

It is this word *mercy* that Peter used to teach his readers their unique identity as God's people in the midst of their surrounding culture. Peter's recipients were Christians of the Jewish diaspora who were living in Asia Minor. Unlike members of the Missouri Synod who seem increasingly undistinguished from Protestant

American culture, the recipients of 1 Peter knew that they were different from their neighbors in various sociological ways. Peter used the word *mercy* to show them that their sociological differences corresponded to a fundamental theological distinction from the surrounding culture. Rather than blur the distinction by conduct that acquiesced to the culture, Peter used the biblical concept of *mercy* to encourage the unique identity of God's people. In fact, *mercy* was the final word in one of Peter's most famous passages: "You are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people who belong to God. You were chosen to tell about the excellent qualities of God, who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not God's people, but now you are. Once you were not shown *mercy*, but now you have been shown *mercy*" (1 Pt 2:9–10 GWN).

With this biblical understanding of *mercy*, the Kyrie in the historic liturgy helps God's people treasure their unique identity today. Of course, the Kyrie is not the only part of the ordinary to do this. The Invocation, for another example, speaks the revealed name of the Triune God so that he is present among the baptized who worship. The Kyrie, our present focus, is effective in establishing the distinct identity of the worshiping community over against their non-worshiping society. The Kyrie has this formative power because it is God's efficacious word. As the faithful speak or chant the Kyrie, they know that all the scriptural assertions about the power of God's word are in operation. "Lord, have *mercy* upon us" invites the God of our baptismal covenant to make us faithful people of His *mercy*, and that is what He does.

It is assumed, of course, that some of these arcane facts must be taught. Just as the Invocation doesn't mean, "Let's get started," so the rich biblical content encapsulated in the Kyrie needs to be taught. That is easily done in sermons, in Bible classes, in confirmation classes, in newsletters, and, in short, wherever the pastor has an opportunity to lead his people deeper into the truth. Because aging baby boomers are demanding quality teaching in many areas of life, it is arguable that the entire liturgy, not only the Kyrie, provides an excellent arena for the pastor to teach the faith to a seeking generation. The current determination to sacrifice liturgy in order to be user-friendly to seekers seems to go against the sociological tide of the aging boomers.

When the Kyrie, indeed the entire liturgy, is taught and practiced, God through his word is constituting his people today just as he did in Peter's time. If the earlier stated proposition is correct, namely, that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is unsure of its cultural identity within Protestant America, it does not automatically follow that teaching and practicing the liturgy will strengthen the institution of the synod. What will result, however, is that our membership will have a greater awareness that God has called us into the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church." God's Word establishes the unity of the church, even when doctrinal disagreements and worship forms have disrupted external institutional harmony.

God's Word through the liturgy establishes the baptized as a "holy nation" that is set apart from the people of this world (1 Pt 2:9). "You have been washed and made holy, and you have received God's approval in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). Through the liturgy God impresses upon the faithful the catholicity of his church. His

church is not simply an American Protestant phenomenon but is worldwide and eternal. Those of the first century who cried out, “Son of David, have mercy upon us,” are united with those who sing the Kyrie in the twentieth century. Finally the liturgy demonstrates that the church is apostolic, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. I find it ironic that the alternative services to which my work sometimes takes me have less word of God than do the traditional orders of the liturgy. When the faithful are taught and practice the effective word of God through the forms of the historic liturgy, they will be more conscious of their participation in the mystical body of Christ, the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.”

The task before the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is not to turn back the clock to past “glory days” and reinvigorate the sociological dynamics that gave us cohesion in the past. Rather we ought to grow in understanding what it means to be called by Baptism into the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” In a derived but very critical way, that will make the members of our congregations see themselves walking together as a confessing movement within Christianity and, by the grace of God, a body that has much to proclaim with joy and confidence. And so the liturgy taught and practiced can promote the cohesiveness of the institution we call the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. That, too, will be a mercy from God.

### III.

The remark about a “confessing movement” brings us to the relationship between liturgical worship and evangelism. The two are not antithetical, as is often presumed, but the latter follows the former. Outreach is a consequence of the divine service.

God’s mercy establishes the identity of his people amidst the surrounding peoples. From that identity flows outreach. “You are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people who belong to God. You were chosen to tell about the excellent qualities of God, who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Later Peter repeats holiness and the hope that comes from mercy as preconditions for witness. “In your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you” (1 Pt 3:15 New Oxford Annotated). This temporal sequence is common in the New Testament and extremely important. First, God establishes his people. Second, His people witness.

Often lost in the false antithesis between liturgy and evangelism is the obvious fact that the purpose of worship is worship and not evangelism. If the faithful gather around word and sacrament for the primary purpose of witnessing to those who have not yet received mercy, then these regular worshipers could be justly accused of hypocrisy. “You try to persuade others of the truth of your faith, but when do you apply those truths to yourself? You seek to gain converts but do not implore mercy for yourselves. It’s as if you say, ‘I thank thee God that I am not like other people are’ and do not plead for mercy or go home justified.” The purpose of worship is for God’s people to worship, not to do evangelism.

Here the objection is fairly raised that evangelism often does happen on Sunday mornings. Seekers in our society do go “church shopping,” and when they come to one of our congregations we

want to “tell about the excellent qualities of God, who called (us) out of darkness into his marvelous light” in such a way that the Spirit has ample room to do his work. This admission, however, does not mean that the liturgy is counterproductive. A chief element of liturgy is the sermon. While the sermon is directed toward the baptized believers (how often we preachers forget that most or all of our hearers have already been converted!), the relationship between justification and sanctification is so intimate for us Lutherans that every sermon to the faithful will present the gospel in a way that an outsider can readily understand.

Besides the sermon, there are many other things that can be done to help make evangelism happen on Sunday mornings. Greeters, user-friendly bulletins, pastors, and laypeople who are active in calling upon visitors (as well as established members), the perception of a friendly and caring community of faith—all these and more help a congregation witness throughout the week and especially on Sunday. None of this changes the fact that the fundamental purpose of worship remains worship for the people of God, something they will be doing for all eternity. Since our weekly worship is a “foretaste of the feast to come,” the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church” will cling conservatively to the historic liturgy and, strengthened in its self-understanding by the efficacious Word of God, will then witness. One final time: The antithesis between liturgy and evangelism is false.

### IV.

This paper is a substantial revision of a presentation I made to a Real Life Worship Conference in Milwaukee in July of 1994. The issues of evangelism and liturgy have not receded in the past year, but have, I fear, intensified. It’s good that we continue to discuss this particular aspect of our doctrine and practice, but I would plead for us to do so in a spirit of love. There are congregations and even families that are deeply divided on these issues. A person does not become a heretic simply by teaching a false doctrine, but rather by rejecting scriptural and confessional conversations aimed at correction and by persisting in the false teaching. We can be genuinely thankful that we are discussing these troubling issues and pray God that our conversations and reflections will in the course of time restore us to that unity of practice that the founders of the synod envisioned.

Let us keep our discussions mindful of the culture in which we live. An illustration may help make the point that liturgy and evangelism, while not antithetical, do in this day and age involve us in some tension. If several rowboats raced from one side of the Mississippi River to the other, the boats would reach the opposite bank in first place, second place, and so on. Only after the race would the contestants notice that the current had carried all their boats downstream. Our contests over liturgical or non-liturgical worship, like many other issues (Communion practices, service of women, fellowship, etc.), are important and need to be pursued, but let us do so recalling that we are discussing these issues in the current of American society. We probably reflect this society more than our forebears did. We could get to the other shore with everything in ecclesial order among us only to discover that we hadn’t been sufficiently cognizant of our surrounding culture, and therefore we had not done the evangelism that our Lord charged us to do. That might be okay if you’re a sect, but we are



not. We are God's people with an unchanging confession for our rapidly drifting culture.

The church adapts the surrounding culture's language and many of its customs with no consequent harm, but we must constantly study to know the limits of legitimate borrowing, and we must pray for the courage to resist wherever necessary the subtle influences that carry us like a current. While it's hard to row upstream and go against the flow, we might find it easier if we acknowledge that's what we're doing rather than find rationalizations for the easier drift downstream. I find that to be the case in continuing the liturgical worship of the church while being zealous for evangelism. In the last analysis, the kingdom of Christ is a counterculture to the kingdom of this world. Martin Franzmann describes God's people in witness:

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

(*LW*, 259: 1)

If the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is a church body searching for its cultural identity, as I think we are, the ultimate answer will not be in aggressive evangelism, as important as that is. Our identity should be stated consciously, repeatedly, and never be taken for granted. "We receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. . . . To obtain such 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" (*AC*, IV, V).

If I am wrong in suggesting that we're unsure of our synodical identity, then praise God. In either case, let us each Lord's Day

consciously step out of our surrounding culture and our time late in the twentieth century and let each divine service teach us again that once we were no people, but now we are God's people. Lord, have mercy upon us.

*The Reverend Dr. Dale A. Meyer  
St. Louis, Missouri*

## TAGLINES

*A phenomenon unique to electronic data communications is called the tagline—a pithy saying attached to the end of an e-mail note. Here are a few that have been seen on various networks.*

- 43% of all statistics are worthless.
- Concordia Plans Cutback: Refuse Novocain—transcend dental medication.
- Pastors are people who have an altar ego.
- "I drank WHAT?!"—Socrates
- Lutheran Church Polity = Keeping freedom safe from democracy.
- Happiness is Earth in your rear view mirror. Back off, man . . . I'm a theologian!
- Lutheran response to Erasmians: Where there's a will, there's a won't.

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