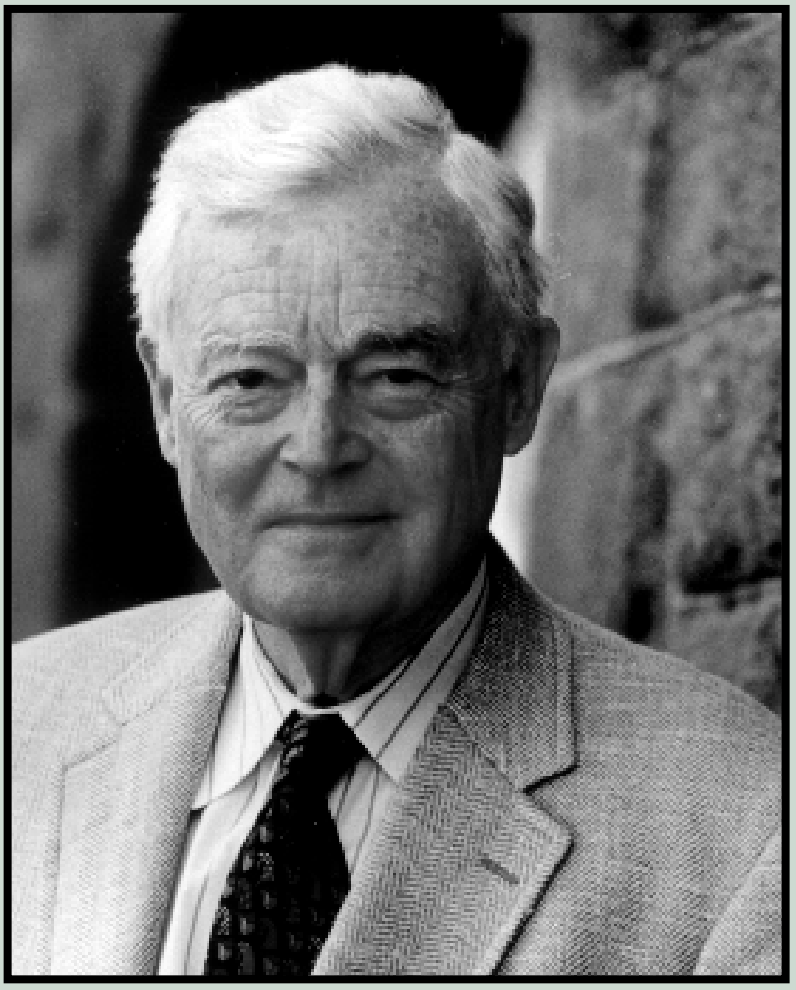
LOGIA

A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY



Robert D. Preus
1924–1995

In Memoriam

HOLY TRINITY 1996 VOLUME V, NUMBER 3

εἴ τις λαλεῖ, ὡς λόγια Θεοῦ

LOGIA is a journal of Lutheran theology. As such it publishes articles on exegetical, historical, systematic, and liturgical theology that promote the orthodox theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. We cling to God's divinely instituted marks of the church: the gospel, preached purely in all its articles, and the sacraments, administered according to Christ's institution. This name expresses what this journal wants to be. In Greek, ΛΟΓΙΑ functions either as an adjective meaning "eloquent," "learned," or "cultured," or as a plural noun meaning "divine revelations," "words," or "messages." The word is found in 1 Peter 4:11, Acts 7:38, and Romans 3:2. Its compound forms include ὁμολογία (confession), ἀπολογία (defense), and ἀναλογία (right relationship). Each of these concepts and all of them together express the purpose and method of this journal. LOGIA considers itself a *free conference in print* and is committed to providing an independent theological forum normed by the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. At the heart of our journal we want our readers to find a love for the sacred Scriptures as the very Word of God, not merely as rule and norm, but especially as Spirit, truth, and life which reveals Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, we confess the church, without apology and without rancor, only with a sincere and fervent love for the precious Bride of Christ, the holy Christian church, "the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God," as Martin Luther says in the Large Catechism (LC II, 42). We are animated by the conviction that the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession represents the true expression of the church which we confess as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

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FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

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

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CONTENTS

Correspondence

To the Editors:

"Robert David Preus: In Memoriam" in *Logia* (Epiphany 1996) began with a discussion of whether or not Dr. Preus was the greatest theologian of the twentieth century. This is a response to that part of the article. The argument that Dr. Preus himself would never have characterized himself as such proves only that he was a modest man who realized full well that he was a sinner who depended entirely on God's grace for salvation. Beyond this his opinion on the subject does not prove anything whatsoever. It is highly unlikely that even Martin Luther himself would have considered himself great.

Unfortunately many historians apply the term "great" mostly to scoundrels and villains such as Herod the "great" and many others like him. To lump Dr. Preus together with such a foul company would certainly not be appropriate at all. On the other hand, in the minds of many people the term "great" still has a positive connotation. Therefore the discussion should start out by defining what is meant by the term "great theologian." In order to be useable in a positive sense the definition of the term should be something like this: "a God-pleasing scholar of outstanding skill and knowledge." This would of course eliminate all scholars who are not orthodox, confessional Lutherans, because there is nothing God-pleasing at all about teaching and preaching false doctrine. A theologian who is not God-pleasing is certainly not *great* in the positive sense of the word; he is not serving God.

Dr. Preus was widely recognized as an outstanding, eminent, theological scholar. There is no question about this fact. Even his enemies grudgingly admit it. But most importantly he was serving God. The vast majority of all twentieth-century theologians of great fame and academic excellence did not and do not serve God. Their talents are completely wasted. After eliminating them there are very few left, and of those few Dr. Robert Preus may very well be the *greatest* one.

Respectfully yours,
Dr. Emanuel F. de Fischer
Kentfield, CA

LOGIA CORRESPONDENCE AND COLLOQUIUM FRATRUM

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

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.

A Sermon on Revelation 7:13–17

Dr. Robert D. Preus

Let us all pray.

> Thanks to Thee, O Christ victorious!
> Thanks to Thee, O Lord of Life!
> Death hath now no power o'er us,
> Thou hast conquered in the strife.
> Thanks because Thou didst arise
> And hast opened Paradise!
> None can fully sing the glory
> Of the resurrection story. Amen. (*TLH* 207: 2)

> And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in His temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

These are thy words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us in thy truth. Thy Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Christian friends, grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Pt 1:3-4).

This magnificent passage from Peter's first epistle has played a profound role in the history of my life. It was first spoken over me at my baptism. And it served as a commentary on what took place then. I who had been born dead was reborn, made alive in Christ, made his child and heir, given a living hope, an eschatology, and an eternal future. That's what happened there. This same passage will be spoken again at my funeral, at the time of the committal. And once again it will serve as a commentary on what has taken place there, proleptically. I have achieved my hope there. I've entered the Church Triumphant. I have come out of the great tribulation. I have washed my robe and made it white in the blood of the Lamb. And therefore, I stand before God's throne day and night and serve him, worship him there in his temple.

During this Fourth Sunday of Easter, I think, our new series, which has this text as one of the pericopes, is trying to emphasize for us the results of Christ's resurrection. And here, of course, we hear about the grandest and greatest of all the results: salvation. And what is the nature of this salvation, this inheritance laid up in heaven for us? No better description could be given than that apocalyptic one in our text: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat . . . and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rv 7:16, 17).

What does that mean? It means that the great tribulation, that awful, hectic, unhappy, wretchedly unhappy tribulation, is over. No more slaughter in Vietnam or Cambodia or Lebanon. No more tragic trips out of hotel windows. No more depressing, awful labor camps. No more clammy, rat-infested tenements and homes. No more riots, unpleasant confrontations, murders, rapes, polarization among people, even brothers. No more heresy, prejudice. No more injustice, pain, sadness, loneliness. A beautiful picture of heaven, isn't it?

And yet all that is only secondary. The essence of heaven is much more. The essence of heaven is this, that God is there. God and the Lamb. Listen to our text. "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them . . . the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them" (Rv 7:15, 17). That is our inheritance! That is our heaven! Asaph, long ago in the Old Testament (people think they didn't even have resurrection back then) . . . Listen to this eschatology of Asaph:

> Whom have I in heaven but thee?
> and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.
> My flesh and my heart faileth;
> but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.
> (Ps 73:25–26)

Now, I'm sure that most people don't make much out of these words. All of this doesn't mean much to most people. They spend their lives on earth fleeing God's presence, avoiding it, silencing every thought of God, evading, even denying him if they can, if

This sermon was given on April 26, 1983, in the Kramer Chapel of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

not by words, then by their deeds. They look for another heaven than God. Maybe a communist Utopia, but that's a phony heaven. Because there is no other heaven. There is no other heaven.

In the sixteenth century, a very hard controversy, a significant controversy, broke out between Ulrich Zwingli and the great reformer of southern Germany, Johann Brenz. The controversy centered in eschatology, on the nature of heaven. Zwingli believed in what he called *coelum empyreum,* that is, a beautiful, airy heaven which God had created on the first day of creation and in which God dwelt with his holy angels and saints, far above the universes. Brenz rejected this. It was a crass, unbiblical, three-story notion which confined heaven to a place outside of our universe. And he rejected it. "No," he said, "that's not heaven at all." The heaven in which God dwells is God's own majesty. The heaven which you and I inherit is God's own inexpressible glory. In heaven we don't require food or drink or sleep or place or time. The heaven which we will inherit transcends all that, time and space and every other earthly condition. That's what Brenz said.

What will it be like, then? Well, Brenz said you can describe it as the Book of Revelation does, more in terms of what it is not than what it is. But one thing is certain. God will be there, and he will be our all in all. And I like to quote him. "God," he says, "will be our all in all. God will be our heaven, our earth, our place, our food, our drink, our life, our righteousness, our strength, our wisdom, our moderation, our happiness. And what more is there," he asks, "than that? God will be everything to us. And this is far more wonderful, far more divine than anything the human mind could devise or anything that human words could express!"

And he goes on and he quotes Isaiah, whom Paul quotes in the New Testament, where he says: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (Is 64:4).

Now why will God and his presence mean everything to us in heaven? Why will all our glory consist entirely in his dwelling among us? Have you ever wondered? It's clear. It is because we will love him so much there. This whole chapter of Revelation is an apocalyptic picture that shows all the activity of heaven, the singing, the praise, the psalms, the service day and night in the temple. All the activity is an activity of love, love and joy in the presence of God and the Lamb. You see, when you love someone, you desire nothing else, nothing more than simply to be with him. That's your pleasure.

The person I love most in this world, you might have expected, is my wife. I never, never get tired of her. I want to be with her all the time. Every now and again, Trudy, my secretary, scolds me for not coming to school at eight o'clock in the morning when I can get the best work done. Well, I'm home, talking, drinking coffee with my wife. That's the way it is when you love someone. That's the way it is when you love God. You cleave and you enjoy his presence. And if you do, he comes to you. He comes to you. He wants to, and he will.

Listen to Jesus: "If a man love me, he will keep my words." He will hang on to those words of promise concerning that eternal hope. "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him," and we will "make our abode," our dwelling place, permanently, our dwelling place "with him"(Jn 14:23). Now, there is nothing figurative about that. It happens. If I love Christ, he comes to me, and he is present with me, he and the Father. And they dwell in me in a beautiful, inexpressible *unio mystica,* actively, graciously, dwelling with and in me; divine Godhead dwells in me.

And this is not just something ontological. God isn't just there. It's something dynamic, operational. He dwells in me and with me, helping me, strengthening me, upholding me. He forgives me, he comforts me, "he leads me," as our text says. Right now, and also in heaven. And he leads me here out of this great tribulation to heaven, to the heaven where he is present in all his glory, where he loves me and I love him, love him not with a failing, faltering, flagging love, but with a perfect love.

Now, that is my living hope. That is my future. And that is my constant and confident prayer for myself, and for every one of you. As Luther so beautifully puts it in his little catechism:

> We pray in this petition, as the sum of all, that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil of body and soul, property and honor, and finally, when our last hour has come, grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this vale of tears [this great tribulation] to himself in heaven. Amen.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. LOGIA

In Memoriam

Robert David Preus

David P. Scaer

Dr. Robert D. Preus will go down in the 150-year history of The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod as one of its most remarkable and influential theologians and churchmen. He was ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, known as "the little Norwegian Synod," whose predecessor synod his great-grandfather had founded and in which his grandfather served. For thirty-eight years Dr. Preus served the Missouri Synod as a professor of systematic theology, first at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (1957–1974) and then at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, later Fort Wayne (1974–1995), of which he was also the president (1974–1989; 1992–1993). History cannot now render a verdict, but at this time no other person has a claim to be recognized as the most significant theologian of this period.

His *Inspiration of the Scriptures,* a doctoral dissertation presented to the University of Edinburgh, was the first detailed study of this doctrine in the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy. It provided the Missouri Synod with an analysis of the view that was essential to understanding its theology. He pursued his studies with another dissertation at the University of Strassbourg that analyzed the theology of the same period. This was published as *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism.* A second published volume with the same title covered the doctrine of God and was the promise of a complete set covering all the doctrines of this period.

During his Saint Louis days he was recognized as the leading confessional professor when certain others were entertaining methods that cast doubt on the historical nature of the Bible. Through his reading of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* he was an authority on neo-orthodoxy, a theological approach that avoided the historical issues by relegating everything in the Bible to a doctrine of revelation that was defined in existential terms. His broad grasp of theology and his confessional convictions attracted students who as pastors became church leaders.

His late brother, Dr. J. A. O. Preus, held to the same fundamental beliefs and was elected synodical president in 1969. By 1974 the opposing approaches represented by the Preus brothers and the faculty precipitated a crisis in which nearly all the professors left their positions in Saint Louis. When the acting president, the late Dr. Martin Scharlemann, could no longer carry out his duties, Dr. Robert Preus was called upon to administer what was until then the largest Lutheran seminary in the western hemisphere. With only two other regular faculty members as instructors, he recruited *emeriti* from Saint Louis and colleagues from Springfield where he would become president in May of that same year.

The 1975 synod convention moved the Springfield seminary to Fort Wayne, where it had been founded in 1846. During his presidency the seminary had large enrollments and was financially solvent. (At times it was one of the few schools in the church that were.) Faculty and students were recognized for loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions.

In July 1989, at age 64, Dr. Preus was retired from the presidency by a 5-3 vote of the Board of Regents, after a prior vote of 4-1-3 in May failed. During a lecture Dr. Preus was delivering at the January 1991 symposium, he was notified by a fax letter delivered by the seminary security officer that the synod president and vice-presidents were requesting his removal from the ministerium of the synod. He was noticeably shaken, but continued with the second part of his lecture. A district vice-president soon acceded to this request and for a time Dr. Preus was not considered a minister of the church. During this same time he was charged with false doctrine for defending a colleague's statement that all theology is christology. He was cleared of all charges and returned to the presidency of the seminary by the 1992 synod convention. It was understood that after leaving that position in April 1993, he would remain as professor of systematic theology until his retirement. But seminary officials intervened and again he was not allowed to teach or preach in chapel. In April 1994 he and his wife, Donna, after seventeen years in Fort Wayne, left for Minnesota. At sixty-nine he was the same age as some colleagues and younger than others. He took a prominent part in the July 1995 synod convention, where he was narrowly deprived of election to the synodical praesidium.

His wide success as a theologian and organizer and his popularity with students and lay people may have been underlying reasons for his removal. All charges against him were found to be without substance. Although some questioned his administrative competency, he had in 1989 garnered enough funds to eliminate tuition for students. Men of lesser stamina might have retreated, but he was determined to rebuild funds intended for tuition that had been depleted after his removal in 1989.

When the 1995 synod convention voted by large majorities for a change in the membership of the Fort Wayne Board of Regents, this was widely interpreted as another vindication. The new board intended not only to let Dr. Preus return as an active professor, but also to confer on him the title of president emeritus. He took an active part in the September faculty meetings, in which he resolved a thorny issue raised by a district president about pastors' loyalty to the synod if they did not support women as congregational presidents. During these same three months

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after the convention, he made plans to resume teaching in the fall of 1996 and to reactivate some off-campus sites. He was going to take a prominent part in the 1996 Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions, an idea he had originated in 1978, and to lay out plans for the seminary's future.

Beginning in 1989 he laid plans for the Luther Academy, which he served as president. Among its purposes were sponsoring the confessional journal *Logia*; publishing the *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics* series, of which he was the editor and for which he himself was writing volumes on the Scriptures and justification; and conducting scholarly meetings. Annual gatherings were held in Chicago, and a few days before he died he was in Saint Catharines for the Sasse Symposium, of which the Luther Academy was a sponsor.

At the time of his removal from office, Dr. Preus also had plans for the seminary to offer the Doctor of Theology and Doctor of Missiology degrees, which reflected his great loves. Plans for the Doctor of Theology, which involved a chair of confessional Lutheran studies, were consistently thwarted, though it was widely recognized that under his leadership the seminary had the resources. After he returned to the presidency in 1992, he again took up this dream of a chair of confessional Lutheran studies, which he would hold for a year or two. This offer was declined, and again he was no longer allowed to teach any seminary courses. In the morning of the day he died he was laying down plans to establish this chair, though he no longer desired it for himself. The seminary board in cooperation with the Preus family is carrying out his wishes to create the chair he was not allowed to hold. In his honor it will be called the Robert D. Preus Chair of Confessional Studies.

Dr. Preus was a significant figure in Evangelical circles, where his commitment to the Scriptures was admired. He was welcomed into their societies, where he played a leading role and contributed to their anthologies. His staunch defense of biblical inerrancy and what he had done for the Missouri Synod in 1974 attracted the admiration of those who would later fight the same kinds of battles in their churches. He was credited with starting a revolution towards a more conservative Christianity in other denominations.

After participating in the September faculty meeting, he lectured in Finland and laid plans for a seminary extension in Cambridge, England. Dr. Preus's obvious vitality left his family, friends, and admirers unprepared for his death. His calendar years stood diametrically opposed to his extensive plans for writing and teaching. The six years of controversy provided his church with a focal point to clarify the newer theological issues, but they had taken a toll on him. His vigor and zeal for theology and for the seminary were still there, but to those who had known him only a few years before he had noticeably aged. He seemed to be unaware of the price he had been forced to pay.

The year 1974 with its controversy over the Bible in which Dr. Robert Preus was a prominent factor has been considered the watershed year for the Missouri Synod. His removal from the presidency in 1989 and the following six years in which he worked to exercise his position as a teacher of the church at the seminary may give historians reason to reevaluate the importance of the earlier date. The confessional theology of the Missouri Synod and the Fort Wayne seminary remain as tributes to what he has done. Our tribute to him is maintaining his heritage. LOGIA

Commemoration Sermon for Dr. Robert D. Preus

David P. Scaer

Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended (Dt 34:8).

Two things were remarkable about the funeral orations for Dr. Preus. He was the greatest Lutheran theologian of our time. He also happened to be a sinner—hardly startling information. For a reminder, the Monday edition of the most carefully read newspaper in the Missouri Synod put that fact in headlines six times. "Who's the best" and "who's the worst" at anything, including doing theology or sinning, is an open question, but Robert Preus himself spoke in superlatives.

Four days before he died, Dr. Preus introduced Pastor Gottfried Martens at the Sasse Symposium. He mentioned that Martens's idea for a doctoral dissertation came from his elective on justification. Justification and inspiration were what Preus was all about. He introduced his sermons like this: "The text is taken from the second chapter of St. Paul's letter to the Galatians, which the Holy Ghost caused to be recorded by inspiration." It was like the first course in dogmatics, but better. Then he would recite a hymn which had to do with faith, fear of sin, the inevitability of death, and salvation in Christ. He was the ablest of dogmaticians, but he never preached doctrinal essays. That was not his style. He preached Jesus Christ.

Preus's introductions were full of hyperboles. Fort Wayne had the best students, faculty and campus. Some squirmed with feigned modesty. The 1980s have already become legendary as the best of times. Ask the students. History may in these next years again prove his exaggerations right. Preus encouraged when we were depressed.

Exile from his own church and seminary brought on a depression of his soul that only a few experience and from which nearly all flee. Some still shout, "If this man were not an evildoer, we would not have handed him over." Let these voices be forever silent. Abandonment by friends and desertion by brothers, by those whom you love, is God's ultimate approval, though it does not seem that way at the time. "A man's enemies are those of his own household." Luther called it *Anfechtungen,* God's masks. In the Psalms it's *eli eli lama sabachthani.* For Jesus it was: "So persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Divine affliction perfects the saint. Robert Preus in his last years was perfected with a divine vengeance. He bore those marks in his body and soul. Friend and foe watched him age.

Preus's introduction of Dr. Martens was full of his customary compliments. In his Erlangen University dissertation Martens showed that the Lutheran World Federation was not able to define the chief doctrine of faith. Justification is not an existential experience, something within the believer, but it happens in Christ and gives faith its certainty. Paul said Christ is our justification. Preus was about to say Martens had been his best student. He caught himself in mid-sentence. With so many other students present, he couldn't do it. A father cannot say he loves one child more than another. His students were his sons. If the last seven years had been kinder to him, as many prayed, and had he lived another decade, as he had planned, the thousands of students who counted him as their father would have increased. A veritable Abraham. Put Preus in the commons after chapel and it was jammed. Put Preus in the Lone Star State in a hot August and the pastors gave up their vacations. "Where the body is, there the eagles gather," and they gathered and kept gathering and they are gathering in this place today. Like a Lutheran John Wesley, he had more students outside locked classrooms than we had inside. If the doors of one pulpit were shut, a world opened to him. Students are here today because of him and they will still come.

On the night before Preus died, an emeritus colleague said we had to let the past go. The next morning the past actually refused to go away. He was on the phone with Bill Weinrich with plans for his place at the seminary. The hands of the clock were being turned back, so it seemed. Twice banished like Jacob, he was returning from Egypt to join Israel in her march. In hours God rendered nostalgia useless. From Nebo he saw the future of a seminary which reflected who he was, but to which God did not permit him to return. "So Moses the servant of the Lord died in the land of Moab." An era in the synod had ended. The bell had tolled on his generation. Preus more than anyone else set the tone of the age and determined its character. The top half of the hour glass had discharged its sands. The silver cord was snapped. The golden bowl was broken. The dust returned to the earth. And we watched.

Some said it was only his charisma. They were right. His person, piety, theology, call, and ministry were his charisma from God. If the seminary students are now discouraged from hammering out theological differences, Preus talked theology all the time—as much with his family as with his students. Since he was what he believed, he could no more let his call be taken from him than he could let the charge of false doctrine against him stand, especially a charge that it was wrong to hold that Christ permeates theology in all its parts. Unanswered false doctrine would let

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lies masquerade as God's truth. He fought. He was vindicated. He paid a price. We are paying that price without him.

My classmates are agreed to a man that dogmatics in the mid-1950s was a completely undistinguished enterprise. That's a polite way of saying it was dull. You read the book. The highlight of the day was a poorly worded quiz. When Preus came to St. Louis in 1957, the change was radical. He had the intellectual capacity to recognize where the church was going and the conviction and courage to do something about it. And he did. Around him gathered a generation of students who caught the contagion of his convictions. From this confessional revival we were born. When students are talking theology outside the classrooms, you know the enterprise is alive. Authoritarianism kills theology. Now his students are found in the pulpits and classrooms everywhere. They are still doing theology at this symposium, which was his brainchild. Luther disputed the church councils. Preus questioned a synod's direction. Lutherans cannot surrender that right. Edicts, decrees, resolutions, opinions, and policies cannot take the place of theology. Church councils can and do err and will. That's Luther.

Unattended on the desk rests the pen of the scholar of classical Lutheranism. The popular young dogmatics teacher of the 1950s and 1960s is gone. Death has removed the lonely champion of the St. Louis seminary of the early 1970s. Where would St. Louis, St. Catharines, and Fort Wayne be without him? But life denied him the honors which men with safely concealed courage and fractional intellectual ability continue to receive in abundance. If no seminary honored him with *doctor divinitatis honoris causa,* a grateful church may recognize him as *doctor ecclesiae.* He was a teacher of our church in a sense that only a few men in our 150 years are. He encapsulated a theological generation within himself. He has departed. Honors given in death can never compensate for the recognition life was embarrassed to give.

Robert Preus fought his first battle for the Bible: "us conservatives versus those moderates." Issues were clear, or at least clearer than they are now. We are in another conflict whose first battle was Preus's last. When he was tried for the alleged christological heresy, he responded at his trial with the hymn: "Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus / Can my heartfelt longing still." St. Paul had a similar problem: to live was Christ and to die was gain. Preus has gained. We must content ourselves with Christ alone. If the demythologizing of the 1970s was a twentieth-century form of Rationalism, then a neo-evangelicalism of spiritual self-advancement, rapacious self-analysis, financial self-promotion, and emotional self-satisfaction is only another form of self-centered Pietism where Christ again is pushed to the side and our weak faith is put in the center.

"[Preus] was a witness for the truth, the truth of the biblical gospel, a real teacher of the church. He was a confessional Lutheran who confessed that faith all through his life. He did not waver; he did not compromise the Lutheran Confessions. He followed his mentor, Luther, and taught the theology of the cross. And he lived the theology of the cross, which is never easy. That was his accomplishment in life, the glory of his ministry, and his legacy to the church, all by grace alone." Not my words but his.

Our ensign is lowered, but God shall raise another Gideon for us around whom banners shall fly. On the bottom of Robert Preus's funeral folder was Revelation 14:13, "Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor.'" The last words of that verse were left out: "For their works follow them." For Robert Preus these words may have been the least important, but for us they are the most important. For the greatest work of faith is restoring the foundations, preserving the pure doctrine, and preaching the gospel. This he did!

Those who die in the Lord are absorbed into his wounds and are safely hidden under his altar on which he offers himself as an eternal sacrifice to God. As God's priests they are not silent, but they join Jesus, our High Priest, in praying to the eternal Father that he would deliver us from sin, death, and all evil. To their prayers for us we respond with our hymns so that only one song of praise rises in the power of the Holy Spirit from earth and heaven to the Father of all mercies and to him who washed us by his blood. In the poverty of sin, but in the conviction of faith, we salute that soldier who fought for the faith and won.

All hail mighty legions! You toiled in tears and pain.
Farewell! Sing salvation's glad refrain!
Swing high your palms. Lift up your voice.
Eternal praise belongs to God and the Lamb.

Farewell, dear friend, farewell. LOGIA

Robert David Preus

In Memoriam

Wilhelm W. Petersen

Robert Preus was a personal friend of mine for almost half a century. I truly valued his friendship over the years and I learned much from him. I first met him when he enrolled in Bethany Lutheran Seminary in 1947. I was a student at Bethany College at the time, and I recall how Robert enjoyed chatting with the college students. I remember having several visits with him, and it is fair to say that those conversations did much to spur my interest in studying for the ministry. Robert was very knowledgeable and deeply interested in theology and loved discussing it with others.

I remember him telling why he left Luther Seminary (the ELC seminary at the time) and came to Bethany. While he was concerned about the heterodox character of the seminary, he was especially troubled over the blatant synergism that was being taught there, particularly by one of his professors. In a respectful manner young Robert took issue with him in the classroom and also in the professor's office. When it became apparent that the situation would not change, Robert went to his professor and told him that for conscience reasons he was leaving Luther Seminary. The professor responded by saying, "Robert, if you are right, then I do not understand the Christian religion," to which the young student replied, "Professor, if you are right, then I cannot be certain of my salvation." He then left Luther Seminary and came to Bethany Lutheran Seminary.

Robert often spoke of his days at Bethany Seminary, especially of the influence that Dr. Norman A. Madson Sr. and Dr. Sigurd Ylvisaker had on him. He was especially grateful for and appreciative of the emphasis on the doctrine of objective justification. This left a lasting impression on him, as can be seen from his many writings and lectures on the doctrine of justification. Interestingly, when he attended the Reformation Lectures at Bethany last October (just a few days before his death), each speaker was asked to identify himself, and Robert introduced himself as "Robert Preus, first graduate of Bethany Seminary." He always spoke highly of Bethany and the theological education that he received there, and he remembered his alma mater by leaving his library to Bethany. This will be a tremendous asset to the seminary.

On May 29, 1948, Robert Preus was joined in holy wedlock with Donna Mae Rockman. This union was blessed with eleven children, one of whom died at birth and is buried in a small country cemetery in northern Minnesota where Robert served as pastor at the time. He was also grandfather to forty-eight grandchildren at the time of his death. His wife, Donna, was a faithful helpmeet and devoted mother, always a gracious hostess. Husband Robert realized that he had a gem in Donna and often spoke of her in endearing terms. When I think of Donna, the words of Proverbs 31 come to mind where the writer describes a true wife and mother:

> Strength and honour are her clothing . . . She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

Family devotion was a top priority in the Preus home. Robert Preus was a priest in his own home. The devotions were geared to his growing family and included the singing of hymns. When I attended his funeral I was not surprised that hymns such as "I Walk in Danger All the Way" and "Behold a Host Arrayed in White," by Hans Brorson, and Thomas Kingo's "Like the Golden Sun Ascending" were sung. I know that these hymns were among his favorites. Truly, "the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous" (Ps 118:15) characterized the Preus family devotional life. It should also be mentioned that four of his sons followed in their father's footsteps in studying for the ministry.

Robert Preus was ordained into the office of the public ministry of word and sacrament in 1947. Since we were neighboring pastors in northern Minnesota, we would on occasion exchange pulpits. He was a good preacher. I heard members of his parish describe his preaching as "down-to-earth" and "on the level of the people." The test of a theologian is his ability to communicate the gospel in a clear, comforting, and edifying manner. He once told me that when he went to church he wanted to hear a simple law and gospel sermon, and that is what characterized his preaching.

Pastor Preus also felt it important to call on his members in their homes. He held to the old adage: "a home-visiting pastor makes for a church-going family." He felt that by visiting his members on their home turf he learned to know their needs, and this helped him in his sermonizing. I recall him telling me about a call he made on one of his members who was known for "imbibing" a little too freely. As Pastor Preus drove into the farm yard he saw this member walk into the barn. Following him into the barn, Reverend Preus engaged in conversation with him. When he came to the purpose of his visit, he asked him why he drank so much. Pointing to the farm house the farmer said, "Reverend, if you had to live with her [his wife] you would drink too." On another occasion he called on a delinquent who hadn't been in church for sev-

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eral months and asked him why he hadn't been in church. The member responded by saying, "Oh, it isn't necessary to go to church; I can listen to a sermon on my radio." To which Pastor Preus replied, "They shouldn't sell radios to people like you." The member laughed. He was in church the next Sunday.

Upon graduation from Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Robert Preus continued his theological education. He received his first earned doctorate from Edinburgh University, Scotland, and after serving several years in the parish ministry received another doctorate from the University of Strassbourg, France. He was the author of *The Inspiration of Scripture* and volumes 1 and 2 of *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism,* and was in the process of writing volume 3 when he died. He also wrote many articles that were published, and he lectured extensively throughout the world. He taught at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and was president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

Though he had impressive academic credentials, Robert Preus wanted to be known as a practical theologian, in the good sense of the word. I heard him say several times that "all theology is practical," meaning that theology addresses man's greatest need. He understood the Latin theological axiom *quod non est practicum, non est theologicum* (what is not practical is not theological). Martin Luther once facetiously remarked that when some theologians get together they speak in such lofty language that they astound even God in heaven! But not so with Robert Preus. As a parish pastor he preached sermons that his parishioners could understand, and they were edified by them. I marveled at his deep knowledge of theology and his ability to articulate it in clear and understandable language. He was mindful of what our Lutheran Confessions say about being practical: "Practical and clear sermons hold an audience . . . . The real adornment of the churches is godly, practical, and clear teaching" (Ap XXIV, 50).

To Robert Preus the bottom line of theology was the salvation of blood-bought souls, and that certainly permeated his preaching and teaching. In personal conversation he often spoke of heaven and his desire to be with the Lord. That desire has now become a reality. By the grace of God he is now enjoying the unending bliss of glory in heaven.

We in the ELS were saddened when he left our fellowship and accepted a call to teach theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. This was a difficult decision for him to make and I know that he agonized over it. But Dr. Preus remained a friend of the ELS, spoke highly of the theological education that he received at Bethany Seminary, and kept in contact with many of his friends in the ELS. Members of parishes that he served in the ELS still speak well of him.

It is a matter of record that he contended valiantly for the truth. I recall at the time of the St. Louis "walkout" in 1974 that on the CBS evening news there was a clip showing Dr. Preus holding up a Bible in a classroom with only five students and saying, "The walkout is because of this book." At the time, the historical-critical method of interpretation was taught by some professors at the seminary, and Dr. Preus was one who staunchly defended the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.

I believe that Professor Juul Madson, a colleague and now retired professor of Bethany Lutheran Seminary, expressed the thoughts of many in the ELS when upon hearing of Dr. Preus's death he issued this statement:

> Above all, Robert Preus desired to retain, and clearly expressed to the end, the doctrine of the objective justification of a sinner before God for Christ's sake, as well as the complementary doctrine of the verbal inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy of Holy Scripture through which alone the gospel of pure grace is revealed and proclaimed. And now in his absence the Lord permits us to profit from the many scriptural and confessional products of his pen, as well as from the continued proclamation of the gospel by those privileged to be fortified in the same at the feet of this sinner-saint, by God's grace both a humble Christian and a distinguished and honored theologian.

I can think of no better way to conclude this memorial tribute than by quoting a hymn verse which eloquently describes the faith in which Robert Preus lived and died and which was sung at his funeral.

> For the joy Thy birth doth give me
> For Thy holy, precious Word,
> For Thy baptism which doth save me,
> For Thy gracious festal board,
> For Thy death, the bitter scorn,
> For Thy resurrection morn,
> Lord, I thank Thee and extol Thee,
> And in heaven I shall behold Thee.
> (*Lutheran Hymnary* 325: 10) LOGIA

Robert Preus, Historian of Theology

John Stephenson

When Robert and Donna Preus, holidaying in England with Steve and Katy Briel, treated my wife and me to dinner along with Ron and Carol Feuerhahn, Bonnie and I approached their Cambridge hotel with no little trepidation. Just married and fresh from passing my Ph.D. oral exam, in the summer of 1983 I was a Lutheran of less than five years' standing, greatly curious to learn more of the ELCE's big sister across the ocean. Several Americans passing through Cambridge had chilled my spine with horror stories of a humorless, nay downright fulminating Torquemada figure responsible for turning the Fort Wayne seminary into a training school for guards at the dead orthodox concentration camps that Missouri's parishes had allegedly become.

The real Robert Preus swiftly exorcised the caricature assembled by many unkind tongues, whose owners took the easy route of substituting scornful satire for reasoned engagement. Over a twelve-year period, mention of Dr. Preus in the Stephenson household conjured up memories of his infectious smile and unbounded generosity. Already by the time we left Fort Wayne after my year of colloquy study (1984) and oftentimes thereafter, my wife would voice her strong impression that Robert Preus wanted the best for the church, whether in the parish, the classroom, or the mission field. This gifted man lived for things other than his own reputation or comfort.

As a professor I have observed the dire burden invariably placed on a seminary president, who must be pastor, churchman, theologian, administrator, diplomat, and much else besides. With the Oxbridge model of academic life still dominating my mind, back in 1984 I had little sense of the pressures then borne by Dr. Preus in his North American context, but was hugely impressed by the quality of the conversations he would initiate when I stopped by his office in connection with the nuts and bolts of my colloquy program. This midwesterner was cosmopolitan, *au fait* with the churchly, theological, and cultural goings-on of several continents. His reading ranged far beyond theology—at some juncture in 1984 he returned from his Minnesota cottage eager to discuss a volume on English society under the later Stuarts. Preus's theological learning, worn lightly, was profound, and his vocabulary, though never shown off, was immense. As we later corresponded about the progress of his dogmatics series, I discovered how unparochial was this deep-dyed Synodical Conference Lutheran, who entertained considerable respect for Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, whom he once labeled "more Catholic—in the best sense of the word—than the pope."

The many tributes recently paid to Robert Preus as this generation's premier dogmatician of the Missouri Synod have overlooked the remarkable yet widely forgotten fact that his major full-length works rank under the heading of historical theology. Along with his Edinburgh dissertation *The Inspiration of Scripture,* the two volumes of *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheran Theology* are, properly speaking, historical studies clearing a path for systematics. A winsome raconteur in the classroom and at the dinner table, Preus delighted to tell the story of the epochs, personalities, and issues of Lutheran Orthodoxy, authoring the only major study of this chapter of theological history available in the English language. The historical dimension remained prominent in the writings which, notwithstanding his increased administrative duties, Preus devoted to the Formula and Book of Concord in the late 1970s. Significant contributions to recent church history can be found in the elderly Preus's review of John Tietjen's memoirs, and in his obituary remarks on his brother. The planned third volume of *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism* ended abruptly in the locus of angelology to leave the discipline of historical theology the loser. Preus once explained to me that systematics has no subsistence of its own, but exists as an alloy of exegetical and historical theology.

Preus's love of the past was not the flip side of a hatred of the present; respect for former practitioners of Lutheran Orthodoxy did not lead him to practice a blinkered repristinationism insensitive to the needs of the present. In the first volume of *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism,* he related how John Gerhard added philosophy to exegesis and history as a third strand to be woven into the texture of systematic theology. While not uncritical of Gerhard's innovation, Preus was himself an attentive student of modern thought; he strove for an updated confessionalism that would address today's issues in contemporary language.

If a fanatic is one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject, Robert Preus must be spared this epithet on both counts. As Kurt Marquart noted in his Preface to *A Lively Legacy,* Preus's theological career was not spent "riding pet hobbyhorses," but involved "a creative, not uncritical, appropriation of the tradition." As ecclesiastical trends shifted his attention from *sola Scriptura* to *sola gratia* while his devotion remained focused on *solus Christus*—his only criticism of the Sasse Symposium papers was that they did not contain enough Christology for his taste—Preus went out of his way to encourage and enter into the work of other, especially younger, scholars. The Robert Preus of liberal caricature would have hit the roof when presented with Gottfried

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Martens's mammoth term paper on the understanding of the *ex opere operato* principle in the early Lutheran Confessions. Martens instead received an A+ grade fortified with more than a decade of high praise. This teacher could be persuaded by a student that classical Lutheranism had misrepresented Roman sacramentology. Preus thus exercised the chief cardinal virtue of prudence under the aspect of *docilitas*. It is the mark of a great teacher to be himself teachable.

Robert Preus's scripturally and confessionally bounded open-mindedness on disputed historical and systematic issues was apt to be accompanied by superabundant graciousness. As in the case of the *ex opere operato* principle, so also on the matter of the Consecration in the Lord's Supper Preus allowed the cumulative weight of evidence to overrule long-standing opinion. While he never became an ardent "consecrationist," Preus conceded that later Lutheran Orthodoxy departed from the fullness of Luther's and Chemnitz's confession as embodied in FC SD VII. Whenever the Consecration came up for discussion, he would point out that the issue was settled by Luther's quotation of Augustine in the Large Catechism to the effect that "The Word is added to the element, and it becomes a sacrament." Almost a decade ago a virulently polemical *ad hominem* article of mine on this issue generated at least as much heat as it did light. Though this unmannerly blast occasioned Preus great embarrassment, he never rebuked me for the substance of what I wrote, even though he certainly regretted my tone.

As we lunched together three days before his death, I was struck by the contrast between the youthful zest of his ongoing passion for good theology on the one hand, and the painful evidence of how the vendetta of officialdom against him had both outwardly aged and inwardly hurt Preus on the other. Lunch turned into a tutorial on the methodology of orthodox Lutheran systematics given with an eye to future work on the dogmatics series. While Preus spoke of the progress of volume three of *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism* and announced his intention to get down in earnest to his fascicle on justification, his chief concern lay in encouraging the labors of younger scholars. This modest man had no greed for fame, wishing simply that God be glorified for the monergism of grace in the second and third articles of the Creed. Yet with the passing of both Preus brothers, who has the requisite fluency in Latin to undertake the historical scholarship that would allow the seventeenth century to speak to our present?

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In recent years Preus had several times signed his letters with "Robert," thus granting permission for me to address him by his Christian name. The contempt heaped on him by his enemies reinforced my old-world inclination to stick with the respectful, but not obsequious, vocative "Dr. Preus," but I was both moved and delighted to return from the Maple Grove funeral to find on my desk a handwritten letter on the day before his death, expressing his enjoyment of the Sasse Symposium ("a great conference"), and ending with "Yours, in Christ, Robert." Looking back on last October, I rejoice to have been permitted to say a personal thank you to the yet living Dr. Preus at the symposium banquet before bringing greetings from the St. Catharine's seminary over his mortal remains. Thank you, Robert, for being to me a kind, fatherly friend and mentor. May God grant to your many spiritual sons the grace to continue and complete the work you began for His glory and the Gospel's lively sound and spread. LOGIA

The "Realist Principle" of Theology

Kurt Marquart

Robert Preus delivered his Reformation Lectures at Bethany College and Seminary on the subject "How is the Lutheran Church to Interpret and Use the Old and New Testaments?" The year was 1973. At that very time Preus was at the center of a fierce struggle that led to the "Seminex" eruption a few months later. Forged in the furnace of that conflict, Preus's hermeneutical theses clearly mark and document the total incompatibility between the theology of the *Book of Concord* and the ideology of historical criticism.

As the fourth of his six theses Preus lists "Luther's Realist Principle." This is nothing to do with any philosophical theory. It means that Luther "was a simple realist in the sense of the early Christians in their antipathy to docetism, Gnosticism and pagan mythologies."[1] The whole scope is theological, not philosophical: "The doctrines revealed in Scripture and the acts of God recounted there have a real basis, a real referent, or there could be no theology at all [for] Luther."[2] Like Luther, the authors of the Confessions "did believe that history and reality underlay the theology of Scripture." Citing election, the sacraments, justification, the virgin birth, miracles, resurrection, and ascension, Preus concludes: "Any theology of non-event is unthinkable to Luther and our Confessions."[3] By contrast historical criticism, with Zwingli as a forerunner, reduces Christianity

> to a religion of ideas or truths which are not based upon historic facts or reality (Hegel, Strauss, Troeltsch, Ritschl, Harnack, Idealism, Classical Liberalism). Or one may retreat into subjectivity (Kierkegaard, Tillich, Bultmann, Kaesemann and the post-Bultmannians), or Schwaermerei (E. Brunner, K. Barth). But in both cases one has departed from historic Christianity which is based upon the reality of a living God acting in real history.[4]

Responding to the essay, Prof. B. W. Teigen saw in this realism "the heart of the difference" between Lutheran and historical-critical hermeneutics.[5]

Preus kept returning to this crucial theme whenever he treated of hermeneutics. So for instance he specified "biblical realism, a presupposition for biblical interpretation," in his discussion of the hermeneutics of the Formula of Concord.[6] There he introduced the word "ontological" in rejecting the historical-critical approach: "These exegetes claim to be faithful to Scripture and even to its *sensus literalis*, although they do not believe often in the historic or ontological reality underlying biblical assertions."

Having pointed out the repeated use of *vere* (verily, truly) in the Augsburg Confession—regarding God, sin, Christ's redemptive suffering and resurrection, and his sacramental presence—Preus concludes:

> The *vere* is added to underline the fact that *est* expresses reality as used in Scripture and theology, even when figurative language is employed. For instance, the right hand of God may indeed be a figurative expression, but it denotes a reality.

Highly significant is this conclusion: "In fact the very doctrine of the real presence of the body and blood is a classical expression of the principle [of realism]."

Elsewhere[7] Robert Preus—in the name of Luther's "Christocentricity . . . always affirmed in a doctrinal and realistic soteriological context"—castigated "modern liberal theologians since the Enlightenment [who] cannot accept the historical or in many cases the theologico-ontological (Incarnation, Trinity, etc.) referents of biblical assertions." Indeed, if Christology is thus reduced to "mere general spiritual truths, religious ideas, symbolic language, eternal truths, experience, myth, anthropology, then the very term Christocentricity of Scripture is a piece of deceptive theological blather."

In his earlier contributions to Montgomery's *Crisis in Lutheran Theology* in 1967 Preus had not yet defined a "realism principle" as such, or talked about "ontology." But all the same basic concerns are there, as are extensive polemics against non-historical readings of Genesis or the Gospels. One final citation will have to suffice here:

> It is not by accident that the central doctrine of justification is preceded in the AC by the articles on God, Creation, the Fall and Original Sin, Christ and his work of propitiation. All these must be real if there is any reality in the justification of a sinner before God.[8]

Why all this stress on what is "real," or, to give it a fancy name, on "ontology"?

As an experienced combatant in the world-wide theological arena, Robert Preus understood very well the fatal illness at the heart of most contemporary theologizing. It is a fundamental frivolity, which endlessly weaves, unweaves, and reweaves various word-patterns, which, however ingenious, do not ultimately bind anyone to anything. Such a non-committal manipulation of reli-

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gious verbiage is an academic game, unworthy of the solemn name "theology"—words from and about God! The caricature was exemplified not long ago by the theological faculty of the University of Riga, when it reportedly told the Latvian church authorities that it could only provide academic theology, but was neither able nor willing to prepare pastors for the church!

With the Lutheran fathers, Robert Preus insisted, on the contrary, that theology is a practical, spiritual, God-given fitness for the holy office of administering the saving treasures of God ("stewards of the mysteries of God," 1 Cor 4:1; "able ministers of the New Testament," 2 Cor 3:6). To reduce theology to a *mere* intellectual exercise or to clever conjuring with "cultural" images is to make light of, to profane, holy things. Hence the scarcely concealed scorn in Preus's words: "deceptive theological blather."

A non-referential theology is a theology without content, a discipline without subject-matter. That is the ultimate force of Ferdinand Hahn's observation that the "renunciation of the theological relevance of the factual element . . . has meant for exegesis something like a loss of reality."[9] The "post-modern" attempts to gloss over this loss merely create verbose pretend-theologies: we all tell our favorite "stories" *as if* they were true—but of course we know that none of them is really, ontologically, superior to the others. It is difficult to improve on the biting satire of "The Bishop's Gambit," an episode in the BBC comedy series *Yes, Prime Minister*, in which a cynical bureaucrat instructs a naïve prime minister that "theology's a device for helping agnostics stay within the church"!

A theology worth its salt will hardly gain the world's admiration (1 Cor 1:18–24). But a theology that does not even respect itself invites a double portion of contempt. Take the case of a well-known physicist, Frank Tipler, attending the 1990 meeting of the American Academy of Religion. When a speaker mentioned Thomas Aquinas's treatment of cannibalism as an obstacle to the resurrection of the dead, the "audience, several hundred theologians and religious studies professors, thought this quaint 'problem' hilarious, and laughed loudly." Tipler concluded: "I infer that the typical American theologian/religious studies professor has never seriously thought about the resurrection of the dead."[10] One can at least understand the attraction of Tipler's impossible alternative: "Either theology is pure nonsense, a subject with no content, or else theology must ultimately become a branch of physics."[11] Tipler's own wide-ranging *tour de force*, entitled *The Physics of Immortality*, illustrates the futility of the theology-as-physics project. It purports to demonstrate scientifically the probability that the universe will ultimately converge upon an Omega Point, which will be a personal, omnipotent and omniscient god/goddess, who "loves" us and will cybernetically "emulate" or resurrect us all for a happy eternity! Is it a case of the very stones—or their quantum states—crying out when theologians are silent or laughing?

The most unlikely stories are now believable if told by "science," whilst the most obvious moral platitudes are suspect if associated with historic Christianity. This catastrophic reversal belongs to the Cultural Revolution, which, accelerated by the social dislocations of several major wars, has now overtaken the western world. For the foreseeable future the mythology of scientism will supply the articles of faith for our cultural elites, who are increasingly impatient with what seem to them the narrow, divisive, and exclusive truth-claims of the Christian creed.

The British science writer Bryan Appleyard has written a thoughtful account of our cultural crisis in his *Understanding the Present: Science and the Soul of Modern Man*. He shows the squalor that results from the confusion of technological effectiveness with truth. All ethical issues are ultimately redefined as problems to be solved by an omnicompetent scientific technology. Permanent moral standards are therefore by definition ruled out. "Science begins by saying it can answer only *this* kind of question," writes Appleyard, "and ends by claiming that *these* are the only questions that can be asked."[12] An even more energetic critique is *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism in Science, Law, and Education*, by Berkeley law professor Phillip E. Johnson. Johnson actually takes on the sacred cow of Darwinism, something about which the physicist Tipler seems oddly credulous.

A non-referential theology is a theology without content, a discipline without subject-matter.

The great merit of Johnson in particular is that he differentiates clearly between naturalism and science. Our so-called "chattering classes," that is, the shapers of our public culture, by contrast, see no difference between science and scientism. Yet that distinction is crucial. It is in fact suggested by the recent philosophy of science, especially in the wake of the late Sir Karl Popper, which effectively discredits superstitious notions of science as an all-encompassing infallible dogma. The genuine achievements of relativity theory and quantum mechanics are one thing—and they make the universe a much more mysterious entity than classical physics could imagine. But pontifications about the spontaneous and chance origins of the universe, of life, and of human consciousness are quite another thing. The propaganda for scientistic naturalism deliberately lumps all these together and presents them to a dazzled public as "science." But when the "soft" mythology is cloaked in the prestige of "hard" science and technological success, people become completely skeptical of anything that runs counter to the official mythology.

Since dominant cultural forces are notoriously pervasive, it would be sheer nonsense to pretend that we church people are unaffected by them. Rather, the cultural predisposition acts as a hidden deafness to the Christian proclamation, discounting it with a sort of subliminal definition of faith as "believing what you know to be untrue." Hence the enormous pressures at all levels of church life to waffle, fudge, and smudge.

If there is anything to these musings, it is clearly not enough to respond by crying "faith, faith, faith!"—for it is the very nature and content of faith that is at issue. Of course only the Holy Spirit creates faith, and this only through the gospel (always including the sacraments). But genuine gospel preaching does not skirt issues. Its duty is also to "confute objectors" (Ti 1:9 NEB). Nor

may such confutation be restricted to the safely dead mythologies of the past. It is the living dragons of deceit above all that must be unmasked and discredited. If scientistic secularism is indeed the leading mythology of our age, which seeps into our very bones from every blaring radio and every blathering television screen, then the preachers of the gospel need to be able to understand the thing clearly and cope with it competently. That implies much more attention to science and the philosophy of science in seminary curricula, which have traditionally focused instead on the humanities. Luther did not rave ignorantly against scholasticism, but demolished it on the basis of a competent grasp of the subject. Scientism is today's scholasticism.

It is clear that the issue of "realism" in theology is not settled simply by professions of belief in the authority of Holy Writ. The pervasive secularist mythology can emasculate and unnerve theology despite formal assent to Scripture. Two examples come to mind. One is a grim preoccupation, at the behest of "Church Growth," with methods, techniques, and endless statistical surveys and studies. The corresponding disinterest in, if not outright hostility to theology suggests a flight from the intangible realities of faith (2 Cor 4:18) to the firmer ground of sight, measurement, and "scientific" validation. It is just what the ruling culture would predict.

The second example is suggested by Luther's comment in a letter to Spalatin of 9 September 1521 that Erasmus was "far from a knowledge of grace, since he in all his writings looks not to the cross but to peace. He therefore imagines that everything must be treated and handled courteously and with a certain urbane benevolence" (WA Br 2: 387). One thinks at once of a certain formulaic kind of bureaucratic theologizing: Start with a windy list of alternatives, apply philology to show that the Bible does not speak directly to any of them, set out carefully balanced "guidelines" or "biblical principles," conclude inconclusively to ensure that no concrete change in the status quo is required. Theology suffers whenever words are stressed at the expense of realities. In his comments on Genesis 16:12–14 Luther repeatedly stresses the primacy of content over words, philology, and grammar:

> To him who has no knowledge of the subject matter the knowledge of the meaning of the word will be of no help . . . Thus if you have a firm grasp of the subject matter, the language is easy, as Horace also points out. Words, he says, are not reluctant to follow where the subject matter has been discerned well beforehand, understood, and considered. But where there is no knowledge of the subject matter, there a knowledge of the words is worthless . . . Those whose words originate in their mouths are talkative but not eloquent (AE 3:67, 68, 73).

"Realism" simply means taking theology with the utmost seriousness. In doing just that Robert Preus showed himself a true spiritual son of Martin Luther, who took all the divine treasures at face value, and refused the counterfeits spun from mere mental conceits. Mortimer Adler's *Truth in Religion* cites Josiah Royce's quip "that a liar is a person who willfully misplaces his ontological predicates, putting 'is' where he should put 'is not,' or the reverse."[13]

"Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom 3:4). LOGIA

NOTES

1. Robert Preus, "How Is the Lutheran Church to Interpret and Use the Old and New Testaments?" *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 14 (Fall 1973): 31–32.
2. Ibid., 31.
3. Ibid., 32.
4. Ibid., 48.
5. Ibid., 59.
6. Robert Preus, "The Hermeneutics of the Formula of Concord," in *No Other Gospel*, ed. Arnold J. Koelpin (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1980), 332.
7. Robert Preus, "A Response to the Unity of the Bible," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 678–679.
8. John Warwick Montgomery, ed., *Crisis in Lutheran Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), 2:91.
9. Ferdinand Hahn, "Probleme historischer Kritik," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 63 (1972): 6.
10. Frank J. Tipler, *The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God, and the Resurrection of the Dead* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), xiii.
11. Ibid., 3.
12. Bryan Appleyard, *Understanding the Present* (London: Picador, 1993), 249.
13. Mortimer Adler, *Truth in Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 116.

Solus Christus

Daniel Preus

PART I: MARTIN LUTHER

One does not need to read far in Luther nor to read much of what is written about him to discover that the doctrine of justification was central to his theology and preaching. According to Heinrich Bornkamm, Luther effected a revolution in theology with his "new understanding of justification as the all-inclusive theme of the Christian faith, on the one hand, and a new understanding of the Bible as the comprehensive corroboration of justification, on the other".[1]

Thus Marc Lienhard indicates that Luther's position on indulgences was taken primarily because they called into question the gospel.[2] Scott Hendrix declares that Luther's entire battle against the papacy was the result of Luther's having been caught in a conflict between the truth of the gospel and the tyranny of Antichrist.[3] Lienhard asserts that it was Luther's understanding of the doctrine of justification that led directly to his opposition to the Roman doctrine on the eucharist.

All of Luther's battles were fought out of a conviction that justification was indeed the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*. Brian Gerrish sums it up well when he states that the article of justification was, according to Luther, master and head, Lord, governor, and judge over all doctrine.[4] Even Alistair McGrath, who believes that the doctrine of justification was not the leading principle of the Reformation and "that it is no longer possible to assert with any degree of certainty that the Reformation began as a consequence of Luther's new insights into man's justification," nevertheless asserts: "It was Luther above all who saw the *articulus iustificationis* as the word of the gospel, to which all else was subordinate."[5]

Justification is at the center of all of Luther's theology, and Christ is at the center of the doctrine of justification and therefore at the center of all theology. "The first and chief article is this," Luther says in the Smalcald Articles, "that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, 'was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification'" (SA II, I, 1, Tappert, 292). In his *Lectures on the First Epistle of St. John* (1527), Luther writes, "Through the Gospel, we conclude that Christ alone justifies us" (AE 30: 283). In this same work Luther states, "our hearts should trust in Christ's righteousness alone and be justified" (AE 30: 285). And again,

> I have nothing before God and cannot think of God without knowing that Christ is His Son and the Mediator of the whole world. Thus one must begin with the coming of Christ, and when stating the causes of salvation one must flee for refuge to Him (AE 30: 287–288).

Christ is our justifier. To speak of justification is to speak of the person and work of Christ, and it is to deny the merit and value of works. In *Against Hanswurst* (1541) Luther insists:

> For there are not, and could not be, more than these two ways: the one which relies upon God's grace, and the other which builds on our own works and merit. The first is the way of the ancient church, of all the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, as Scripture testifies. The other is the way of the pope and his church (AE 41: 213).

Nowhere is Luther's christocentric principle in the article of justification more evident than in his ongoing conflict with the papacy. The centrality of christology in his eventual battle against the pope was certainly not clear even to Luther himself when he first posted the *Ninety-five Theses* on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. A few months later, in a letter to Staupitz, Luther expressed his confidence in Leo X as one through whose verdict Christ himself would speak. "This Christ is the judge whose verdict I am awaiting through the Roman See" (AE 48: 69). As late as January 1519 Luther would write to Leo and confess, "you truly stand in the place of Christ" (AE 48: 100).

As Luther's struggle for the gospel, his battle for the article of justification, continued, however, and as he confronted the pope at every turn as an obstacle to the proclamation of Christ, his honoring of the papal office rapidly came to an end. Only two months after confessing his confidence in the office of Leo X, Luther would be bold enough to say in a letter to George Spalatin, "I do not know whether the pope is the Antichrist himself or whether he is his apostle, so miserably is Christ (that is, the truth) corrupted and crucified by the pope in the decretals" (AE 48: 114). Already in this confession one can see the christocentric nature of Luther's concern with the papacy.

Eventually, of course, all doubt was removed from his mind, and by 1521 Luther would write to Staupitz: "I have burned the books of the pope and the bull, at first with trembling and praying; but now I am more pleased with this than with any other action of my life, for [these books] are worse than I had thought" (AE 48: 192). In the same year Luther would speak of the pope as the Roman Antichrist and the papists as bloodthirsty murderers of souls (AE 48: 215, 249). This identification of the pope as Antichrist would never be shaken but would be expressed in ever more definite language over the years.

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Luther's struggle against the papacy cannot be seen simply as a desire to effect reform, as though the office itself were good or at least innocuous, needing only to be purged of its faults. Nor can it be seen as an angry reaction against individual popes. Rather, Luther came to view the office of the papacy as an institution of the devil and the pope as an eschatological figure who, in view of his office, was committed until the last day to do battle against Christ, that is, against the gospel.

Thus the vast majority of Luther's statements condemning the papacy deals not with transgressions against the second table of the law or with scandalous behavior, but with the papacy's attack upon the gospel and therefore upon Christ. Luther's excoriating assault on the papal office does not zero in on greed, the luxury of the papal court, simony or the cost of indulgences, but on the fact that the flock of Christ is deprived of the gospel.

Always at the center of Luther's conflict with the pope was the article on justification, at the center of which always stood the person and work of Jesus Christ.

> But the spirit of the pope is the subtlest. He acknowledges the coming of Christ and keeps the apostolic words and sermons; but he has removed the kernel, namely, that Christ came to save sinners. Hence he has filled the world with sects, has left everything for a show, and has really done away with everything. Skill and guile are needed to pollute everything under the best guise, to say that Christ suffered for us and yet to teach at the same time that we render satisfaction. All the rest of the heretics are antichrists in part, but he who is against the whole Christ is the only true Antichrist. Thus one must close one's eyes to all teachings, and the only thought and way of justification to which one must cling is this, that it takes place through Christ (*First John,* AE 30:287).

To fully appreciate Luther's relentless assault on the office of the papacy, attention needs to be given to two features of his understanding of the papal office, particularly as they relate to his remarkably christocentric understanding of the article on justification.

In the first place, Luther viewed the pope as an eschatological figure whom Satan had raised up during the last days to be ordained into an antichristian office as the foremost apostle and bishop of an antichristian church. Luther's typical christocentric emphasis is especially clear in his eschatology. The pope as an inherently eschatological figure can only be understood in opposition to the person of the Son of God. Until the end, Christ will always be opposed by Antichrist, just as the true church will always be opposed by the false church.

The title itself of Luther's treatise *Against the Roman Papacy, an Institution of the Devil*, written in 1545, indicates his view of the origin of the papacy. Everything that follows in this treatise only supports the title. His frequent references to the pope as "His Satanty," "Most Hellish Father," and "Your Hellishness"[6] are not meant only as insults, but also to express the source out of which the papal office flows. Even Luther's crude and frequent references to the "ass-fart pope" and various renderings of this same coarse nomenclature (AE 41: 335–337) are not meant simply to be vulgar ridicule designed by a mad and frustrated old man to drive his enemy to fury. They are, rather, a theological statement about the source of the papal office. One need only read the entire treatise to see that this is so, as Luther again and again points to Satan himself as the founder of the papal office. Thus the pope is called the possession of the devil (AE 41: 286) who founded the papacy (296) and drives the pope (290), as the destroyer of Christendom (278), to attack Christ (339), exterminate the gospel (296),[7] and ravage Christ's flock (323).

The pope is, by virtue of his office, the enemy of Christ and the gospel.

If Luther's doctrine of justification, indeed all his theology, can be said to be christocentric, then his view of the papacy could perhaps be termed "antichristocentric." The pope is, by virtue of his office, the enemy of Christ and the gospel. In fact, his office has been founded with the very intention that it stand forever in opposition to Christ. Therefore "it is a blasphemous, accursed office, so that even if one should wish to be pious, one would still have to be a blasphemer and enemy of Christ, because of one's office" (AE 41:333).

It would be a mistake, moreover, to conclude that this harsh judgment against the papacy was characteristic only of the late Luther. Already in 1520, in his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther was declaring the papacy the Antichrist, Babylon (AE 36: 12, 72, 83), the hunting of Rome (12), thus establishing its intimate connection with the devil (79).

In the second place, the office of Antichrist has been founded not simply to attack Christ, but to attack his true love, the church. Just as the office of the pastor is to stand in the stead of Christ and feed the flock, so the office of the pope is to stand in the stead of Satan and fleece, devour, and destroy the flock. Luther sees any attack upon the article of justification by grace alone, without works, as an attack upon Christ, and any attack upon Christ is an attack upon his flock whose life and hope he alone is. His most frequent criticisms of the pope and the papists, therefore, are that they do not feed the flock.

"Are you a shepherd of souls, O Pope?" Luther was asking in anguish already in 1520 (AE 36: 80), not only betraying his own love for the flock but also bewailing that under the pope's kingdom the sheep were led astray. In the same year, in *On the Papacy in Rome,* he laments the great injury done to "the miserable and poor sheep of Christ" and castigates the popes who "boast of being shepherds and 'tenders,' when in reality they are wolves, thieves, and murderers, as the Lord says in John 10 (AE 39: 100)." In 1521 Luther insisted that the people were still hungry after they had been fed by the pope (*The Misuse of the Mass,* AE 36: 182.) and accused those who should have been shepherds of devouring, destroying, and flaying instead with ungodly doctrine (225). In 1522 he attacks the papal bishops for their "wolfish fury" and cautions the sheep to "beware of the shepherd more than of the wolves" (*Against the Spiritual Estate of the Pope,* AE 39: 271).

Luther's concern for the sheep and his anger that they are being deprived of the gospel and, therefore, of Christ, continue throughout his life and, if anything, become even more intense as the years go by. In a sermon in 1531, he declares: "It is disgusting for me to see the pope . . . chewing up the Gospel" (AE 51: 223). In 1541 he continues to agonize over the loss of souls, describing the pope's church as the mouth of the devil and the jaws of hell swallowing into hell first the pope and then all the world (*Against Hanswurst,* AE 41: 206). Only a year before he died, Luther was still attacking the pope for his refusal to permit Christians to believe that Jesus Christ is the rock upon which the church is built.

> No pope can admit or tolerate this meaning, since it does not refer us either to pope, bishops, or to any human being, be he king or emperor, but assembles us all under the only Son of God, the true rock of our Salvation—assembles us so completely upon Christ alone that we have to forsake even ourselves and our good works and be made just and holy solely through faith in him (*Against the Roman Papacy,* AE 41: 328).

Toward the end of his life, Luther's writings became more volatile. Perhaps his acerbic polemic can be attributed partially to frustration or anger. But two far stronger causes can be found in his eschatological battle against Antichrist and his never-ending concern for the sheep of Christ. Luther knew that Antichrist would be destroyed by Christ on the last day, and he was afraid that, should he die before that day came, the battle against the one whose office was founded to destroy the church would lose its force. And if that should happen, what would become of Christ's sheep?

PART II: ROBERT PREUS

Robert Preus was a Lutheran—not just in name, but also in confession, in practice, and in faith. Throughout his entire career, as it was for Luther, the article of justification was central to his theology, and Christ was at the center of this article. Those who sat at his feet as students can testify to his love for the "first and chief article." His insistence upon the teaching of objective justification as necessary to a proper understanding of God's saving work testifies to the christocentric nature of his belief with regard to justification and all of theology.

Like Luther, Robert Preus believed that to speak of justification was to speak of Christ, and to speak of Christ was to speak of justification. In 1992 he described Luther's *solus Christus* principle. "It is obvious that justification before God and the work of Christ as Propitiator and Redeemer belong inextricably together and, so far as Luther is concerned, really constitute the same article."[8] He could just as well have been describing his own convictions. And when he continued in the same article to speak of Luther's view that all Scripture is christocentric, he echoed again his own belief. How can it be otherwise? Jesus is our Savior; Jesus is our hope. Without him we have nothing.

Like Luther, Robert Preus also had a heightened appreciation for eschatology during the latter years of his life. His christocentric understanding of the article of justification and of Scripture led him to this greater appreciation when he saw in his own life what Luther had seen in his, namely, that the person and work of Christ will always be the target of all Satan's attacks. If all theology is christocentric, this is how it must be. He saw it as no coincidence that one who so dedicated himself to the study of justification, and whose own faith was so firmly anchored in him who is at the center of all doctrine, should have suffered so much abuse at the hands of members of his own church body. And if his exile did not seem *to others* to be a direct result of his teaching on justification, Satan's purpose was obvious. For if the teacher is discredited, what will be thought of his teaching? And in the end, this was the primary concern for Robert Preus, as it was for Luther. He did not want vindication for his own sake but for the sake of the gospel and therefore for the sake of the church. He was a pastor to congregations for only about ten years, but he was a pastor to the church from the day of his ordination until he died.

Robert Preus believed that to speak of justification was to speak of Christ, and to speak of Christ was to speak of justification.

Probably nowhere else can his pastoral heart be discerned more clearly than in the instruction he provided to his own children. He was not content to leave this task to others; catechization was a common feature of the daily family devotions he conducted. And in these devotions the article on justification was central, again with particular emphasis on the person of Christ.

This emphasis was probably seen most easily in his hymn selection. Over the years he and my mother taught us hundreds of hymn verses. A quick review of the verses used most often in family devotions reveals a startlingly heavy emphasis on the christological. The so-called "Praise Hymns" were not his favorites. He apparently wanted his children pointed to Jesus, because over and over again he chose hymns and single stanzas of hymns that were strongly christocentric in their proclamation of salvation. One hymn in particular was typical of the focus of the hymnody in our home. The first verse proclaims:

> Christ alone is our salvation,
> Christ the Rock on which we stand;
> Other than this sure foundation
> Will be found but sinking sand.
> Christ, His cross and resurrection,
> Is alone the sinner's plea;
> At the throne of God's perfection
> Nothing else can set him free.

The third verse with a stronger eschatological flavor is equally christocentric:

> When we perfect joy shall enter,
> 'Tis in Him our bliss will rise;
> He's the essence, soul and center

Of the glory in the skies;
In redemption's wondrous story
Planned before our parents' fall,
From the cross unto the glory,
Jesus Christ is all in all.

Another very popular hymn in our home was the well-known hymn "One thing Needful!" We sang the first verse, skipped the next six, some of which dealt with subjects such as leaving earthly joys behind, the heart of Mary burning with emotion, the faithful following of Jesus, and then sang the eighth verse, which speaks for itself in its christology:

Jesus, in Thy cross are centered
All the marvels of Thy grace;
Thou, my Savior, once hast entered
Through Thy blood the holy place:
Thy sacrifice holy there wrought my redemption,
From Satan's dominion I now have exemption;
The way is now free to the Father's high throne,
Where I may approach Him in Thy name alone.

Melodies were never a barrier. Good hymns simply had to be learned, and the christological stanzas had to be sung. One hymn with a particularly difficult melody was "In Jesus' Name." We always sang the first verse of a hymn, but once again we omitted the second verse of this hymn, which deals with our praising of God, and directed our attention to the third verse, which spoke more directly of the work of Christ and his grace. Robert Preus believed that the greatest praise that could be given to God was to speak of the person and work of his Son. Until the day he died, he never tired speaking of Jesus. His love for the gospel and his desire to proclaim it remained undiminished. Thus this third verse of the hymn "In Jesus' Name" was sung in our home not only because it taught us children about Jesus, but also because it so vividly expressed the faith of our mother and father:

In Jesus' name
We live and we will die;
If then we live,
His love we will proclaim;
If we die, we gain thereby.
In Jesus' name,
Who from heaven to us came,
We shall again arise
To meet Him in the skies,
When at last, saved by His grace,
We shall see Him face to face,
Live with Him in Paradise. LOGIA

NOTES

1. Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career: 1521–1530,* trans. E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 184.
2. Marc Lienhard, *Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ: Stages and Themes of the Reformer's Christology,* trans. Edwin H. Robertson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 93.
3. Scott H. Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy: Stages in a Reformation Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 97.
4. Brian Albert Gerrish, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 58.
5. Alistair Mcgrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification,* 2 vols. (Cambridge: University Press, 1986), 2: 1, 10.
6. See *Against Hanswurst,* AE 41: 263, where Luther in one paragraph alone refers to Pope Paul III as "Your Hellishness" no fewer than five times.
7. "He [the pope] destroys everything that the Son of God our Lord has gained for us with his blood."
8. Robert Preus, "Luther: Word, Doctrine and Confession," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 32 (December 1992): 31.

Luther Battles the Fanatics

Arnold J. Koelpin

This essay, written in 1983, is offered here in memory of Dr. Preus. The theological struggles that were a part of Dr. Preus's service to the church in the twentieth century are not without similarity to the struggles of the sixteenth century.

What made Martin Luther tick? That question undoubtedly is on the minds of all who pause this year to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the Reformer's death. The answer often mirrors the respondent's own historical reflections, much like the person who seeks to find another in the murky waters of a deep well, and, looking down, sees his own face instead.

A popular tract distributed in the Minnesota archdiocese in our generation makes this assessment of Luther:

> Psychologically, he was a strange character, almost a Jekyll and Hyde by turns. In religious moments his imagination poured itself out in poetry and hymns. But these, and many other beautiful passages that can be gathered from the writings of Luther, were merely the remnants of his Catholic inheritance. In sensual moments, he wallowed in his passions. . . . In belligerent moments he was stubborn to a degree, and flayed his opponents with violent streams of abuse. Luther's greatness was neither a truly human greatness, nor a truly Christian greatness. It was merely, as Maritain and Fisher have pointed out, an animal greatness—a greatness of force, energy, and vehemence of character.[1]

Is this, then, the way we are to understand this "German Hercules," who lashed out against pope and fanatic, Jew and peasant alike? How do we explain a man who at the same time tenderly admonishes, "You have Christ in your neighbor. You ought to serve him, for what you do to your neighbor in need you do to the Lord Christ himself"?[2]

Luther himself provides a clue to what makes him tick. It can be found underneath the canopy stones in Katherine's portal of the Augustinian monastery. There is carved the face of Martin Luther, and surrounding it is the motto he chose to be set in stone. It reads: *In silentio et spe erit fortitudo vestra*—"in quietness and hope is your strength."[3]

A meaningless motto, unfit for a fighter? By no means! This Old Testament scholar carefully chose words from the prophet Isaiah, whose situation in life matched his own. Both were caught in the midst of a struggle on two fronts: Isaiah between the superpowers of Assyria and Egypt, Luther between the papacy and the fanatics. Both sought strength, not in the choice of sides, but in the quietness of faith. The clue to understanding the Reformer, as his watchword indicates, is simply to be found in a willingness to wait for the Lord to act by listening to God's Word and trusting his ways. "With closed eyes," Luther once wrote: "[Abraham] hid himself in the darkness of faith, and there he found eternal light."[4] The good Doctor followed the same course.

Did he really? How then does Luther, ebullient by nature, presume to act in quietness and reliance on God's Word? Others made similar claims. The spiritualists of his day also found strength in quietness and likewise cited Scripture as their guide. "Scripture speaks of a tranquillity which is a means of coming to God," explained Hans Denck, a free spirit from Nuremberg, and then identified that means as "Christ himself, not to be regarded physically, but rather spiritually."[5] Luther condemned him as a fanatic.

Why? Why did Luther not make common cause with such free spirits? What moved him to call them fanatics and enthusiasts? How did the two really differ? What is "enthusiasm" anyway? These questions drive us to the core of the battle between Luther and the fanatics. To understand, we must take Luther in context and there learn to appreciate more fully the truth of the saying: "What do they know of Luther who only Luther know?" Our insights into this historical encounter can do more than help us identify what made Luther tick. They can especially alert us to the radical nature of Luther's own theology. "For we must not think of the Reformation as though Martin Luther were the norm, and all else deviation from the Lutheran party line," scolds the English historian E. Gordon Rupp, and then explains himself:

> For it is really Luther who is the great surprise. The medievalist, familiar enough with anticlericalism, mysticism, and moralism, finds nothing very surprising in a Von Hutten, Carlstadt, Müntzer, or even Zwingli. But Luther is disconcerting, with his heights and depths of exploration of the Biblical world, his poised and balanced Middle Way between Popery and Puritanism, a more genuine *Via Media* than the Anglican muddle of principle and expediency. I say, he is the surprise. He gave the whole Reformation movement a new thrust and direction. But for him, Puritanism would have swallowed up Protestantism, and the whole matter of the Reformation might have dissolved in a new legalism in religion, and in sectarian strife.[6]

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In his own inimitable way, Rupp latches on to the essence of Luther's church reform: Luther sought the middle way, which was not the golden mean, a third option between extremes, but something entirely different. It was the middle way of faith in the "Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God."[7] "I am plagued by both sides," Luther once complained, "for the fanatic and Anabaptists are more hostile to me than the pope. And the pope is more hostile to me than they are. On both sides, all are enemies of the Gospel."[8] The battle lines were drawn.

LUTHER ENCOUNTERS THE FANATICS

Luther's first brush with the fanatics came during the turmoil that followed his excommunication from Rome and his indictment by the Edict of Worms. Germany was astir with reform. Despite the Edict, people from all walks of life clamored for a new order in church and society. As a consequence Luther was confronted with reform ideas that jeopardized the reform movement, many of which pierced to the heart of his theology.

The Wittenberg insurrection of December 1521 brought the crisis out into the open. Luther now found himself face to face with an enthusiasm for reform that had an alien ring. The encounter with the "Zwickau Prophets" caused him to brand the men with the colloquial term for an excitedly confused person. They were *Schwärmer,* he said—in this case, spiritually confused.[9] The name stuck. Over the years he was to charge them and all like them with throwing the evangelical movement into confusion. They confused the gospel, confused Christ, confused the sacrament, confused God's Word. And such confusion confounded consciences and led to the destruction of faith. The *Schwärmerei* struck at the heart of that very gospel that had led Brother Martin to stand against the Roman Church. It blasphemed God. It was anti-Christ. It was the devil's own work and condemned with him.[10] Luther was determined to strike down such enthusiasm wherever it reared its head with the only means he knew—by attacking their words with the Word.[11]

Luther sought the middle way of faith in the "Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God."

This proved to be no easy task. In less than a decade, from 1521–1530, the ranks of the fanatics swelled to such an extent that Luther was to count among the false brethren his own Wittenberg colleague Carlstadt, fellow Saxon Thomas Müntzer, Ulrich Zwingli of Zurich, the Anabaptist sects, Caspar Schwenkfeld, and that Epicurean who fathered many of these spirits, Desiderius Erasmus. Lutherlike, he often rattled off their names in various combinations.[12] Significantly, the new order had begun with the Zwickauers' attack on the practice of infant baptism. It rapidly enveloped all forms of sacraments. In Luther's eyes, the new baptismal order, later finalized by the Zurich Anabaptists, differed not a whit from the sacramentarian order for the Lord's Supper.[13] Together they had gone after the jugular, and together they needed to be called to account before God and man, as Paul commanded in Titus 3:10–11 "As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned."[14]

LUTHER COUNTERS THE FANATICS ON THE SACRAMENT

Since Luther's deep-seated antagonism to the fanatics' ways grew out of his grasp of the gospel, he was convinced that advocates of the new sacramental order needed to be instructed about Christ and his work. He himself had gained insight into the nature of the sacrament while he was working on the pamphlet *The Pagan Servitude of the Church* in 1520. There, with St. Paul to guide, he laid the foundation for far-reaching reforms of the Roman sacramental system by simply affirming that, at bottom, "there was only one sacrament," and that sacrament was Christ.[15] Any sacrament worthy of the name must take its direction from Christ. "What is true in regard to Christ," he stated flatly, "is also true in regard to the sacrament."[16]

Luther carefully explains what this means, reaching to the early Christian fathers for help in expression. The term *sacramentum,* he points out, is merely the Latin translation of the Greek word μυστήριον. Whenever the Holy Scripture uses the term "sacrament," he says, it does not mean the sign of something sacred, but "the sacred, secret, and hidden thing itself."[17] A sacrament, therefore, does not merely point to the mystery. It is the mystery itself, by which the sacred comes to us under its outward sign. And even though the sacred and holy is veiled under its outward sign, the two belong together as one as Christ is one. "Thus," Luther clarifies, "Christ himself is called a 'sacrament' in 1 Tim. 3: 'Great indeed, is the sacrament (that is the mystery): He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.'"[18]

In this passage Luther finds the key to what Scripture says about the sacrament. Christ is the sacrament/mystery because he is both manifest and hidden, seen yet unseen, true man and true God, manifest in the flesh and preached that way, yet veiled in his Godhead under the cover of flesh. This foolishness, Luther indicates, is "the very wisdom of the Spirit, hidden in a mystery, of which St. Paul speaks to the Corinthians."[19] "Unless you believe it, you cannot understand it. Therefore, a sacrament is a mystery, or secret thing, which is set forth in words but received by faith in the heart."[20] To tamper with the mystery is to tamper with faith at the same time, for faith is that which latches on to God's mystery and lives by it.

The insights Luther gained in his struggle with Rome prepared him for the challenge brought by the fanatics. Anyone who undid God's mysteries, he warned, turned God's truth into a lie.[21] "The sign and the promise should be tied to each other, not torn from each other," he stated. "For the promise always stands in such a way that the letter and seal should be together. Neither avails without the other. One doesn't have faith in a seal which stands by itself, nor in a letter by itself."[22]

If Rome had gone too far in externalizing the sacrament by idolizing the outward signs at the expense of faith, the fanatics

went to the opposite extreme. "In their teaching about the sacraments," Luther observed, "the papists go too far to the left, for they ascribe too much to the sacraments." On the other hand, the sacramentarians go too far to the right because they take everything away from the sacraments.[23] Despising the outward signs, the fanatics emptied the mystery of all substance. In their enthusiasm for Christ, they tried to lay hold on the holy apart from its manifestations. In the new sacramental order they claimed Christ spiritually, apart from the flesh, just as they laid claim on baptism apart from the water.

Luther had encountered this way of thinking from the very outset of his battle with the fanatics. To Nicolaus Storch, leader of the Zwickau Prophets, the water of baptism was plain, common, ordinary water and nothing else. He had mocked the thought that "a handful of water is able to save a man."[24] If water manifested anything at all to him, it merely mirrored the inner spiritual faith he had in Christ.

By dividing flesh from Spirit, they were, in effect, separating the word and elements from the Spirit and ascribing salvation alone to the latter.

Carlstadt, too, maintained that Christ dealt with us "spiritually, not sacramentally."[25] The physical presence of Christ in the sacrament was repugnant to him. He rejected any suggestion that Christ was present any other way than spiritually.[26] In a manner reminiscent of Hans Denck, Carlstadt extolled the supreme virtue of *Gelassenheit* as a means of coming to God through Christ spiritually, apart from the physical. *Gelassenheit* was a mystical way to faith that suggested spiritual abandonment and resignation or, as Rupp puts it, what in modern evangelical jargon would be called "commitment" or "full surrender."[27]

These skirmishes with the "heavenly prophets" proved to be only a prelude for greater battles to come. In Switzerland, the Zwinglians were marching to the same drumbeat. They, too, appealed to a spiritual understanding of the sacrament apart from its outward sign. On the basis of John 6, they argued that Christ repudiated once and for all any physical partaking of his flesh when he said, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing."[28] It was to become their pet passage in the controversy.

Luther's answer to the fanatics was firm and unyielding. He scored them for abandoning the external word or any outward manifestation of God in their quest for spiritual union with him. By dividing flesh from Spirit, they were, in effect, separating the word and elements from the Spirit and ascribing salvation alone to the latter. All that remained of the word, in that case, was a mere external witness which comes to the heart of man and finds the Spirit already existing there. Contrariwise, should the word not find the Spirit in an unbelieving heart, then it was not the Word of God.[29]

What spiritual confusion such enthusiasm brings! If the fanatics were bent on having a pure spirit, Luther admonished, "then they'll get him, that is, the devil, who has no flesh and blood."[30] But Christ and his word and the sacraments are otherwise. Through them God works faith. He gives the sacred through the external. "God has determined," Luther observed, "to give the inward to no one except through the outward. For he wants to give no one the Spirit or faith outside of the outward word and sign instituted by him."[31]

In a summary statement, Luther made his case against the fanatics in no uncertain terms. He said:

> We'll stick to the oral word. The devil can't stand where this means is. . . . There are people who can't stand a bodily God, as God became flesh for us. They want to have a spiritual God and boast of their use of the word, though the use without the fact is a figment of the imagination. God's sending of his Son into the flesh is a fact. The sacrament of baptism is a fact. Those people don't distinguish between the fact and the use of the sacrament. Water, they say, is water, and they don't see it is God's water. . . . I'd like to ask a fanatic how he becomes certain from his thoughts and the arguments of his own heart apart from the word. We have the Scriptures, miracles, sacraments, testimonies. God sent his Son into the flesh, and of him it was said that men saw him, touched him, etc. We intend to stick to this.[32]

The fanatics remained equally adamant in their spiritualism. As their enthusiasm caught on, their numbers increased. Pastors from Hungary alerted Luther to the work of Matthias Biro Devay, an evangelical pastor, who was infecting the eastern bounds of the Empire with the sacramentarian faith.[33] At the same time, Anabaptist communities were spreading along the Rhine and Danube thoroughfares and beyond. The Münster tragedy confirmed Luther in his opposition to such fanatics. So did the letters of Caspar Schwenkfeld. The polite and precise Silesian nobleman and former follower of Luther continued to spread his ideas about faith in and around Ulm in south German Swabia. He set up prayer conventicles for Scripture study apart from any congregational ministration of the sacraments.

By 1540 it became apparent that the doctrinal differences over the sacrament could not be overcome. To those who felt that mere disagreement on this one article of faith should not hinder fellowship, Luther had a ready answer. As he had previously refused fellowship with the sacramentarians at Marburg, he once again reaffirmed his action at the and of his life. "Since my death is now imminent," he wrote in a *Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament* (1544), "I want to take this testimony and this honor along with me before my dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ's judgment seat, that I have earnestly condemned and avoided *[gemieden]* the fanatics and enemies of the sacrament—Karlstadt, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Schwenkfeld, and their disciples at Zurich and wherever they are. . . . They have been admonished often enough and also earnestly enough by me and others. . . . We continue to preach against their blasphemous and deceitful heresy, as they know full well."[34]

Luther felt such harsh judgment was justified. He saw in the fanatics' way of reasoning a revival of early Christian heresies concerning Christ—Nestorius and Eutyches alive again, dividing Christ, confusing his natures. Like them, these fanatics were tampering with the holy, with the mysteries of God, with faith itself. "If someone does not want to believe the article of faith concerning the Lord's Supper," the old Doctor said with measured rhetoric, "how will he ever believe the article of faith concerning the humanity and divinity of Christ in one person?"[35] The early church condemned the errorists, and Luther did the same with their counterparts. The fanatics had broken the fellowship, perversely and persistently.

He is still too Catholic; he fails to introduce new worship forms.

Out of the turmoil of the Reformation, the new church order had arisen in central Europe to free Christians from enslavement to Roman ceremonies. The adherents of this new order honored Luther as an early champion in the struggle. Yet, at the same time, they chided him for not shaking loose entirely from Roman ceremonies. "Luther had indeed destroyed the papacy," they cheered, and then booed, but "he can't build a new church."[36] He is still too Catholic; he fails to introduce new worship forms.

In Luther's eyes, that was just the problem. He charged the fanatics with innovation. By hanging the sacraments into mere ceremonies, they were replacing Roman ceremonies with a new set of ceremonial laws. This was not the evangelical way. "These wretched men think that building up the church consists of the introduction of some sort of new ceremonies," he complained. "They don't realize that building up the church means to lead consciences from doubt and murmuring to faith, knowledge, and to certainty."[37] To abandon the mysteries in building the church was for Luther to abandon the true gospel. And that was symptomatic of another problem.

LUTHER COUNTERS THE FANATICS' LEGALISM

From his first contact with the fanatics during the Wittenberg disturbances, Luther detected a spiritual cocksureness that seemed foreign to the spirit of the gospel. "All of the fanatics with whom I endured long conversations attacked me with the greatest and most presumptuous arrogance," Luther reminisced.[38] At the time, the Zwickau "prophets" made bold claims on the Spirit apart from word and sacraments, citing visions and direct conversations with God. When Luther asked for an external sign to confirm their words, one of the trio shot back that Luther would see signs enough in the future.[39]

The outward signs did come, and they multiplied. Everywhere the fanatics' bold front led to even bolder action. Self assurance often swung over to rash external deeds.

The new church order began in Wittenberg by trying to demolish everything connected with the Roman Mass. Under the leadership of Carlstadt, the movement attempted to do away with traditional forms, images, and vestments. To a people still steeped in Roman forms and doctrines, he made such statements as: "Whoever partakes only of the bread, sins"; "Organs belong to theatrical exhibitions and princely palaces"; "Images in church are wrong"; "Painted idols standing on altars are even more harmful and devilish."[40]

Carlstadt's rhetoric was superseded only by Thomas Müntzer's call for a new spiritual order of the elect. He summoned the common folk to alert. The time had come for Christians-in-covenant to overthrow the unjust and godless oppressors, and he, "Thomas Müntzer, with the sword of Gideon,"[41] would lead the way.

> What are you still sleeping for, why have you not recognized the will of God—do you think he has abandoned you, is that it? Ah, how often have I told you that God can only reveal himself in this way, in your apparent abandonment. . . . The whole of Germany, France and the Roman lands are awake—the Master will start his game. . . . On! On! On! Let not your sword grow cold, let it not be blunted. Smite, cling, clang on the anvil of Nimrod, and cast the tower to the ground. God goes ahead of you, follow, follow, follow.[42]

In Zurich the movement for a new church order began less dramatically with the eating of two pork sausages in defense of an Ash Wednesday fast.[43] Zwingli supported the action by publishing his first reformatory treatise, *Concerning Freedom and the Choice of Food.* Significantly, it had to do with external ceremonies. Within a year, Zwingli was calling on the Zurich City Council to do away with not only relics and images, but also church organs and singing. He based his call to reform on the contention that all church ordinances must be in accordance with God's Word. "God does not desire our decree and doctrine when they do not originate with him," he argued successfully before the council.[44]

Out of the Zurich scene arose the new Baptist order. Unlike Zwingli, the Anabaptists severed connections with civil authorities in order to set up communities of true believers. The new order of baptism excluded minors and all who could or did not give verbal expression of faith in the heart. Only such were given the water mark who did so of their own free will. "The water does not confirm or increase faith, as the scholars at Wittenberg say," the Anabaptist leader, Conrad Grebel, wrote to Thomas Müntzer, "and [does not] give very great comfort [nor] is it the final refuge on the deathbed. . . . Baptism does not save."[45] It, too, like the Lord's Supper and foot washings, was merely a New Testament ceremony, a picture and reminder of spiritual truths.

Luther sensed the hand of Erasmus lurking behind the new church order and the acts of the fanatics. "He is responsible for the sacramentarians," Luther concluded after reviewing Erasmus's *Annotations* on the New Testament, and then added: "To the extent that he is hung up on grammar, to that extent he harms the gospel."[46]

For some time Luther had considered the scholar from Rotterdam to be an Epicurean, i.e., a rationalist and skeptic. In method and approach Erasmus followed the rabbinical grammarians of old who strained over the words of the law and missed the promise underlying it. "In all his writings there is no statement

anywhere about faith in Christ, about victory over sin, etc.,"[47] Luther said with purposeful hyperbole.

He knew what he was talking about. Erasmus's dislike for the mysteries of faith was well documented in his diatribe *On Free Will.*[48] He considered the whole Christian life in itself sacramental. For Erasmus the sacrament was not, as it was for Luther, "the sacred, secret, hidden thing itself."[49] It was, as its Latin etymology and meaning indicated, merely an oath of allegiance by which we obligate ourselves to our Captain and Lord, Jesus Christ. Its emblems were mere outward signs, flags under which the Christian soldier fights, ceremonials representing our commitment to lead a Christian life.[50]

The ties between Erasmus and the new church order were obvious in the fanatics' stress on outward ceremonies and concern for spiritual life apart from the oral word and sacraments. The New Testament, in effect, had been reduced to a new book of canon law, which was basically little different from its Roman counterpart.[51]

Luther reacted vigorously to the new church order of the fanatics. He charged them with destroying the whole doctrine of the gospel and turning God's Word into a new order of law by a cunning interpretation of Scripture.[52] Robbed of the external Christ, they became artful designers of outward rites. Instead of Christ's righteousness they preached a ceremonial righteousness of external works. In their iconoclasm they forgot that Moses' law was for the Jews and was surpassed by Christ.[53]

The fanatics had turned Christian faith inside out.

This law-gospel confusion had dire consequences for true faith. "If the teaching of faith is placed in the background and works are put forward," Luther warned, "then nothing can be good and there is neither counsel nor help [through the gospel]. Then works lead to vainglory and seem to people to be something great, while God's glory disappears."[54]

The whole problem with the arrogant fanatics was that they sought to build the church by breaking images, throwing out singing and organs from the church services, manhandling the sacrament, and even slaughtering the godless, and by all such sort of external means. But the church is built in a quieter manner, where "the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel."[55]

What was achieved by "their course of action?" Luther asked simply in a series of rhetorical questions. "Would they therewith have become Christians? Where would faith and love be? Should they come later? Why should they not have precedence?"[56] No, the fanatics had turned Christian faith inside out. Their law preaching is murder for consciences. It makes law where there is none, breaks Christian freedom, and draws consciences from the understanding of grace to the deceptive appearance of good works. "With laws, sin, and works . . . nothing is set right."[57] There is no certainty in empty ceremonies and in performing rites out of obedience to a new order of law.

But "baptism is a certain sign, in which is comprehended the true God, who made heaven and earth,"[58] as is also the holy supper and the holy word. Luther served notice on all the fanatics that the Holy Spirit "is not acquired through breaking images or any other works, but only through the gospel and faith."[59] For God works from the outside in and in this way counters the devil's delusion:

> The first [way] is the *Law of God,* which is to be preached so that one thereby reveals and teaches how to recognize sin. . . .
>
> Secondly . . . we are then to preach the comforting word of *the gospel and the forgiveness of sins,* so that the conscience again may be comforted and established in the grace of God.
>
> Now the third is *judgment,* the work of putting to death the old man, as in Romans 5, 6, and 7. Here works are concerned, and also suffering and affliction, as we through our own discipline and fasting, watching labor etc., or through other persecution and disgrace put to death our flesh. This putting to death is not handled correctly by these false prophets. For they do not accept what God gives them, but what they themselves choose. . . .
>
> In the fourth place such *works of love toward the neighbor* should flow forth in meekness, patience, kindness, teaching aid, and counsel, spiritually and bodily, free and for nothing, as Christ has dealt with us.
>
> In the fifth and last place, we ought to proclaim *the Law and its works,* not for the Christians, but for the crude and unbelieving. For among Christians we must use the law spiritually, as is said above, to reveal sin. But among the crude masses, on Mr. Everyman, we must use it bodily and roughly . . . .[60]

The Wittenberg professor knew the comfort of these articles of faith well. From the outset of his battle with the fanatics, he warned that they did not know the way of faith because they lacked the sign. Among them, he wrote to Melanchthon, "the sign of the Son of Man is missing, which is the only touchstone of Christians, and a certain differentiator between the spirits."[61] That sign was the true Christian cross, which is not self-imposed.

Luther lived with that cross. He never arrogantly and defensively claimed to be immune to the spirit of enthusiasm. He had clearly identified enthusiasm in the Smalcald Articles as that which "clings to Adam and his descendants from the beginning to the end of the world. It is a poison implanted and inoculated in man by the old dragon."[62] Battling the devil's arts, Luther admitted, proved far more difficult than the struggle with the fanatics. "The bouts I engaged in during the night," he said, "have become much more bitter than those during the day. For my adversaries have only annoyed me, but the devil is able to confront me with arguments. . . . When the devil comes, he is lord of the world and confronts me with strong objections, for Christ has set us not against flesh and blood, but against the powers of the air."[63]

Such spiritual struggles proved to be the training grounds for faith and reliance on God and his Word. From this vantage point Luther was able to identify and unmask the fanatics' ways. "I did not learn my theology all at once," he stated frankly. "I had to ponder over it ever more deeply, and my spiritual trials were of help to me in this, for one does not learn anything without practice. This is what the fanatics and sects lack. They don't have the right adversary, the devil."[64]

The vision of the church militant as an ongoing contest between God and Satan moved Luther to battle the fanatics. Called to be a preacher of Christ and his Word, Luther condemned the new spiritual order because it laid claims on God's Spirit apart from Christ and his work, because it turned Christ's sacraments into make-believe ceremonies, and because it confused consciences concerning the way to faith. In the struggle with Satan, therefore, it failed.

The Reformer walked a different path. He found his strength in the quietness of faith, in reliance on God's Word and God's ways. "I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing,"[65] Luther explained to the congregation in the aftermath of the Diet of Worms. He waited for God to act, for, in the final analysis, the battle was the Lord's.[66] LOGIA

NOTES

1. *New Light on Martin Luther* (Radio Replies Press, 1945), 17. Imprimatur: Johannes Gregorius Murray, Archiepiscopus Sancti Pauli.
2. Quoted in Roland H. Bainton, *The Martin Luther Christmas Book* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), 38.
3. Isaiah 30:15.
4. Erlangen Edition, *Exegetica opera latina,* 4: 136.
5. Walter Fellmann, ed., "Hans Denck, Schriften, 2," in *Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1956), 24: 35, 29–31.
6. E. Gordon Rupp, "Luther and Carlstadt," in *Luther Today* (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1957), 109.
7. AE 31: 31. Thesis 62 of the *Ninety-five Theses.*
8. WA Tr 3: 2873b.
9. Explained in Wilhelm Maurer, "Luther und die Schwärmer," as part of a collection of his works in E.-W. Kohls and G. Mueller, eds., *Kirche und Geschichte 1: Luther und das evangelische Bekenntnis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 107, n. 8.
10. WA Tr 4: 485–486; WA Tr 3: 3323b; WA Tr 1: 342, AE 38: 291–292 and 304–305.
11. Cf. SA III, VIII, 9–10, Tappert, 312–313.
12. AE 38: 287–288 and 291; WA Tr 1: 1, 1400 and 2064; and *passim* in the Table Talk.
13. AE 38: 288; Walch^2 20: 1762.
14. AE 38: 288; Walch^2 20: 1762.
15. AE 36: 18, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), as quoted in John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther* (New York Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1961), 256.
16. AE 36: 35.
17. AE 36: 93.
18. AE 36: 93.
19. AE 36: 94.
20. AE 36: 94.
21. AE 54: 198 (3330a).
22. AE 54: 56.
23. AE 54: 43 (314).
24. WA Tr 2: 2060.
25. A. B. Karlstadt, "Dialogus . . . von dem grewlichen und abgoettisch miszbrauch des hoch wirdigsten sacraments. 1524," in B. Hertzsch, ed., *Karlstadts Schriften aus den Jahren 1523–25* (Halle/Saale 1956), 2: 25, 1–16.
26. AE 40: 204.
27. Rupp, 122.
28. Found in Donald J. Ziegler, ed., *Great Debates of the Reformation* (New York: Random House, 1969), 76–77.
29. WA Tr 3: 3868.
30. WA 23: 261.
31. AE 40: 146.
32. AE 54: 197–198 (3330a).
33. AE 38: 283.
34. AE 38: 287–288.
35. AE 38: 306.
36. AE 54: 195.
37. AE 54: 195–196.
38. WA Tr 2: 2060.
39. Walch^2 22: 1822 (125).
40. Quoted in Ernest G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 536.
41. Written at the end of a letter to Count Ernst of Mansfeld. See Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., The *Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, reprint 1978), 225.
42. Thomas Müntzer, "To his Followers in Allstdet," in E. G. Rupp and B. Drewery, eds., *Martin Luther* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), 120–121.
43. Hillerbrand, 127–128.
44. Hillerbrand, 140.
45. The letter is found in *The Library of Christian Classics,* vol. 25, G. H. Williams & A. M. Mergel, eds., *The Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), 80.
46. WA Tr 5: 5670.
47. AE 54: 78 (466).
48. AE 33: 19 and 24–26, as found in Luther's *Bondage of the Will.*
49. See note 17.
50. Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls, *Die Theologie des Erasmus* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag, 1966), 1: 73 ff.
51. Maurer, 125.
52. AE 40: 79.
53. AE 40: 80–101 *passim.*
54. AE 40: 81.
55. AC VII, 1; Tappert, 32.
56. AE 40: 81.
57. AE 40: 82.
58. WA 16: 178.
59. WA 16: 178.
60. AE 40: 82–83. Emphases added.
61. AE 48: 366.
62. SA III, VIII, 9; Tappert, 313.
63. AE 54: 93 (517).
64. AE 54: 51 (352).
65. AE 51: 77.
66. 1 Samuel 17:47.

Selective Fellowship

Hermann Sasse

The following remarks have been written for circulation among some friends and colleagues in various parts of the world who are deeply interested in the problems of true Lutheran unity. When the editor of this periodical [*Australasian Theological Review*] kindly asked for permission to print it, the author could not possible decline this invitation, especially since also the Lutheran Churches in Australia are vitally interested in these problems. The author is writing as a theologian and not as a church politician. It is necessary to emphasize this at a time when theology is in danger of becoming the tool of church politics. When Bishop Dibelius published in 1926 his famous book *Das Jahrhundart der Kirche,* he met with the strong opposition of Lutheran and Reformed theologians. His answer to K. Barth's *Quousque tendem*, where the mere sociological concept of the Church put forward by Dibelius was rejected, was: "*Ich brauche eine Theologie, mit der ich etwas enfangen kann.*" It was the beginning of an era in the History of the Church in Europe when bishops or synods made decisions of far-reaching importance and later called in the theologians to justify all the mistakes which had been made. This disease has spread through the world during the past generation. It threatens the existence of the Church as well as the existence of true theology. Both have to ask not what is opportune, what is useful, but what is true, what is the truth taught by God's Word. In this sense the following pages are submitted for consideration and discussion.—S

1. According to the *Lutheran Standard*, April 6, 1957, p. 12, the American Lutheran Church has adopted a resolution which reads:

> Wherever congregations and pastors of the ALC find they are mutually agreed in confession and practice with congregations and pastors of other Lutheran Church bodies they may in good conscience practice fellowship both in worship and work.

The importance of this resolution cannot be over-estimated, as the following comment shows which immediately follows and must be regarded as an official explanation*:*

> Since we have reached the place in discussion where we find no doctrinal differences between ourselves and the other major Lutheran bodies in America, and since we are agreed that all bear properly the name Lutheran, and since problems arise only in the area of practice, such a declaration is not only possible but practical. It takes into account existing practices within the Church. The district presidents have assigned the task of devising a practical system for implementing the resolution.

There can hardly be any doubt as to the ultimate goal envisaged by the resolution, *scil,* one Lutheran Church in America which would comprise not only the new Church that will come into existence when the impending merger has been completed, but also The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Augustana Lutheran Church, and the United Lutheran Church.

This is shown by the preceding paragraph, where we read: "The Union Committee has been instructed to urge the Joint Union Committee—i.e., the Union Committee of the merger churches—to maintain the altar and pulpit fellowship which we of the ALC had with the Augustana Lutheran Church in the American Lutheran Conference. The committee has also been instructed to encourage continued negotiations with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and discussions with the Special Commission on Relation to Lutheran Church Bodies in America of the United Lutheran Church." The high aim of Lutheran Unity in America is to be reached by such negotiations between the church bodies, but at the same time by means of selective fellowship. High-level negotiations are to be supplemented by practising such fellowship between congregations and pastors of the various churches. The questions which arise out of this plan are:

(a) Is it true that there are no doctrinal differences between the churches concerned, but only differences of practice, as the authorities of the ALC think?
(b) Is selective fellowship, as suggested by the resolution, a means of overcoming existing disunity?
(c) If not, what is the proper and promising way?

These questions will be briefly discussed here.

2. Before we try to answer the first of these questions it should be made clear that every Lutheran pastor, congregation and church body ought to do whatever it can to further the cause of true Lutheran union. How can the Lutheran Churches claim to teach other Christians the great truth about the true unity of the Church as *Conf. Aug.* 7 teaches it on the basis of Eph. 4, if they themselves are not in fellowship? "Physician, heal thyself." But apart from the fact that just this disagreement between those who accept the

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Book of Concord *magno consensu* and express their consent with a powerful "We believe, teach, and confess" weakens or frustrates the testimony of our churches—we feel this to be the case especially in a country like Australia where Lutheranism is a small minority of about 1% of the nation—can we face the Last Judgment with a good conscience in this respect if we have failed to do all in our power to find a real consensus on the basis of Holy Scripture? In eternity only, in the light of God, we shall see how many souls have been lost by the perpetuation of splits which were not necessary. How dare we acquiesce in the divisions between those who claim to be confessors of the doctrine of the Lutheran Reformation? On this, I think we all should be and are agreed.

3. If from this concern for a true unity among Lutherans we try to answer the first question, we must in the first place ask: What has happened during the past 30 years to justify the statement that the various Lutheran Churches concerned are no longer separated by doctrinal differences, but by practical issues? No one denies that some great differences have disappeared since the linguistic barriers and the varieties caused by the national and cultural backgrounds of the various Lutheran groups in America have disappeared with the integration of the descendants of Lutheran immigrants of various times into the American nation. How far does this concern the question of doctrine? The difference between Walther and Löhe, Missouri and Iowa was most certainly not of a national nature, and the same is true of the difference between these "German" synods and the old General Council. What has happened during the last generation? How can we today make statements like: "We have reached the place in discussion where we find no doctrinal differences between ourselves and the other major bodies in America" without explaining what we have reached? Three explanations are possible. It may be that we have come, in the course of our discussions, to see that our fathers erred when they saw such differences, for instance those which have been regarded as dividing issues between Missouri and Iowa, concerning ministry and congregation, chiliasm, *intuitu fidei* and others, to say nothing of the issues between these churches and the synods which now constitute the ULC. We are not discussing here the wrongs and rights in the controversies in the past. We only ask: Were our fathers right or wrong when they saw doctrinal differences which made it impossible for them to practice church fellowship? They were conscientious men. Was their conscience an erring one? Is that the discovery which we have made?

The second possibility would be that during these years we have reached a consensus on the issues which thus far have divided the Lutheran Churches. Have we really? One might say that the "Common Confession" has settled the doctrinal differences between the ALC and Missouri. Is that really the case? Is not this document, important as it may be, understood differently by either side? Is not this borne out by the fact that the ALC could work out this document and on the other hand at the same time the "United Testimony" as the basis of the merger with other churches? Both documents are in many respects, e.g., concerning the doctrine on the Church and its unity, contradictory. But even if the "Common Confession" had settled the old issues, how is it possible that the ALC wants to maintain altar and pulpit fellowship with the Augustana Church, which by its membership in the NCCCUSA practically rejects the doctrine of CA 7 on the unity of the Church? For that Council wants to express the "oneness" of its member churches including Baptists, Salvation Army, Disciples, Quakers and all types of Reformed Churches. Since dogmatically altar and pulpit fellowship is the highest expression of church fellowship (*koinonia, communio*), this would mean that the ALC (or the future TALC) would be in full communion with Missouri and the Augustana Church. Even communion with the ULC is envisaged. This reminds one of the church policy of Butzer, who first accepted the Wittenberg Concord, thus establishing church fellowship between the Lutheran Church and the former Churches of the Tetrapolitana, and then tried to establish fellowship with the churches of Zuerich and Basel. This comparison is not meant to question the seriousness and sincerity of the men who have put forward those proposals. It only hints at the dangers looming behind such comprehensive plans unless they are based on a consent that has been reached and is not only hoped for. As long as the doctrinal differences have not been settled by a definite and generally accepted agreement, the second possibility has not yet become a reality.

But a confession cannot remain a real confession, if it is only inherited. It must be confessed.

There is a third possibility. "We find no doctrinal differences." Since we probably do not regard our fathers as having acted carelessly and not conscientiously when they remained separated because they did find doctrinal differences, and since these differences have not yet been settled, could it be that we have lost sight of the differences and their serious character? Could it be that during the past thirty or more years our churches have developed in the direction of dogmatic indifference? Such developments have taken place and can take place in any church, the sons no longer understanding the problems of their fathers. Nominally, of course, and most certainly *bona fide,* the present generation maintains the doctrinal standards of the confessions as they have been inherited from the fathers. But a confession cannot remain a real confession, if it is only inherited. It must be confessed. We can confess it only if we are deeply convinced that it is the true interpretation of Scripture. The confession is always the answer of the Church to the Word of God. Christ Himself asked His disciples: "Whom say ye that I am?" (Mark 8:27), "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" It is our Lord Himself who has provoked the first dogma of the Church: Jesus is the Christ, Jesus Christ is Lord. All later confessions and all the various functions of the confessions have their root in this demand of our Lord not only to follow Him, but also to confess our belief. Each generation has to do that again. We do so with the words of the fathers because we find in Scrip-

ture the same truth which they found. But we must do so for ourselves. If we cannot convince ourselves of the truth of their statements, then it would be hypocrisy to accept the confessions. No one wants to be insincere in subscribing to the Book of Concord or the Augsburg Confession (which means the same because we regard the later confessions, as did the Formula of Concord, as the correct interpretation of the CA). But we all should ask ourselves whether we have studied them properly. How many students of theology have even read the Book of Concord from cover to cover? How many of our candidates for ordination have even read the New Testament in Greek from cover to cover, to say nothing of the Old Testament? Our fathers did that. How many psalms do we know by heart in Hebrew, how many passages of the New Testament in Greek? How many articles of the Augsburg Confession do we know by heart, in Latin, of course? If we consider these questions we might understand the changes that have taken place in the Lutheran Churches, and we have to ask ourselves, every one of us: Is this not perhaps the deepest reason why "we find no doctrinal differences" any longer where our fathers found them?

4. What does it mean that in these circumstances we favour "selective fellowship" as a means of reaching unity? It means, in the first place, that we, more or less despairing of solving the doctrinal problems on the highest level, push the problem to the lower levels, leaving it to the congregations and the pastors to attain unity. Is not each local congregation "Church of Christ"? Is it not endowed with the office of the keys? Has it not, according to Luther's writing of 1523, "*Recht und Macht, Lehre zu urteilen*?" Of course, this is true, as it is also true that the pastor must be able to "judge doctrine." However, the question must be raised and answered in all sincerity whether our present congregations and our present pastors are what they ought to be as Lutheran congregations and pastors. As to the congregations, is a newly-established congregation in American or Australian Suburbia, brought together by the work of faithful home missionaries, composed perhaps of people who had no Lutheran background, the same as a congregation in the time of Walther? Does such a congregation possess the Christian training, a thorough knowledge of Bible and Catechism and the main articles of the *Conf. Aug.*, which we find in the congregations of former generations? This should not be misunderstood. We rejoice over any new congregation and we do not want to deny their zeal, their serious will to be a true Lutheran congregation. What we question is only their ability to "judge doctrine" as long as they are still in the process of growing into the Lutheran doctrine. This applies in a special way to Australia, where men and means, available to our big American sisters, are in short supply. From our own experience here we can only deplore the hurry in which sometimes a congregation is regarded as mature which still needs indoctrination, education, spiritual nurture in order to become what a Lutheran congregation ought to be if it should be able to make doctrinal decisions on which the eternal salvation of souls may depend. But the same is to be asked concerning older and well-established congregations. We live in turbulent times; we are rushing from place to place; we cannot live the quiet lives of our forefathers. We must make use of all facilities and means of communication, and we are glad that we have them. But every serious pastor knows the dangers of our restless, motorized ways of life. In such an age we must teach our congregations and pastors to be very careful in exercising their rights and powers and to make no decision which may be fateful also for themselves. By no means we can give them the right to make a decision on church fellowship for themselves without taking regard to their synod and church body, as long as they belong to that body. The reasons are the following.

Thus the first concern of every congregation must be to see that the means of grace are kept in their purity.

It can be maintained that the local church is a divine institution, while synod is only *de jure humano*—which, however, would not be the view of the ALC, as far as I know. The local church has indeed that character and all the rights and duties which follow from it, but only as long as it remains with the pure doctrine of the Gospel and the right administration of the sacraments (which includes also the right understanding of the sacrament, according to Luther). Thus the first concern of every congregation must be to see that the means of grace are kept in their purity. For this purpose it is a member of synod or church body which looks after the individual congregations, serving them by providing pastors, visitors, etc. Without such help a congregation could not remain healthy, especially not in such times as ours. What would our congregations be without the seminaries, to take only this example? Furthermore, synod or church body fulfils duties which the individual congregation or the individual pastor could not fulfil, if the decision on church fellowship were left to them. Suppose two pastors and their congregations would establish the fellowship envisaged by the resolution of the ALC. Either side would find that no difference in doctrine and practice exists between them. That may be true for the present. Would it also be true some years later? The congregations change rapidly, old members die or move to other places, new members come in. Also the pastors may change. The consensus which existed some years before might no longer exist. Would the fellowship remain? Suppose there is a congregation of the ALC and a congregation of Missouri in one town. They would establish fellowship on the conditions prevailing at the moment. Then a pastor with strong chiliastic opinions would come in, or a man with Romanizing leanings or a man who does no longer believe the doctrine of the Real Presence, or a man who practises fellowship with other denominations. Whatever changes there would be, some people would favour them, others not. Would the bond of unity be strong enough to keep them together? Would not the desire to maintain at all costs the fellowship established lead to indifference and finally

to the loss of that sense of the confessional obligation which always has been one of the outstanding characteristics of the Lutheran Church? As a matter of fact, already now the arbitrary decisions of pastors and congregations to introduce or to abolish liturgical vestments is causing confusion. Certainly these things are *adiaphora* and do not destroy the unity of the Church. However, we should interpret the 10th article of the Form. Conc. correctly. The "Church of God" to which the right of decision is attributed, is by no means always the local congregation, and the translation as found in the Concordia Triglotta should be clarified. If a congregation has joined a synod, brotherly love would demand that not only the consciences of the "weak"—whoever these may be in a specific case—should be respected but that the good order should be maintained without which the synod cannot serve properly the local congregation. If in such *adiaphora* arbitrary freedom should be practised, as e.g., with the introduction of new liturgies, the *adiaphora* might soon cease to be *adiaphora*. The introduction of modern Eucharistic Prayers with Roman or Eastern elements would by all means involve a doctrinal problem. Thus the establishment of new rites or even of selective fellowship would in the last analysis mean the destruction of synods, the atomization and disintegration of our Lutheran Churches.

Altar and pulpit fellowship between congregations cannot be established unless the church bodies to which they belong have fellowship. Selective fellowship is unbiblical.

There is especially one function which a church body of more or less congregational type cannot fulfil. This is the maintenance of the bond with the church of the fathers which is so important for the Lutheran Church. Our confession establishes not only the bond between those who now live, but also with those who have confessed the true faith throughout the centuries. An agreement between two congregations would express only the *consensus fratrum*, not the consensus with the fathers and with the future generations which will confess the truth of the Gospel to the end of the world. The catholicity of the confession in space and time would be destroyed if the church body which confesses "*magno consensu*" were atomized and pulverized into a mere aggregation of individuals or small groups. In other words, selective fellowship would not further, but rather destroy the unity of the church bodies, and this means that measure of unity which had been attained. That has happened in many Reformed Churches. Certainly an isolated congregation can exist, as also isolated Christians can remain Christians. Such are cases of emergency. It should, however, not be forgotten, that already in the New Testament we find not only isolated congregations. The great decision which the Church of Antioch had to make regarding Jewish and Gentile Christianity was made in conjunction with the Church at Jerusalem as the mother church. Paul writes not only to the Church at Corinth, but includes all believers in all Achaia. For Paul (1 Cor. 16) as for John (Rev. 1:11) the churches of the province of Asia, though each of them was the Church of its city, were one, as probably also the churches of Galatia and Syria, and obviously (Acts 8) the churches of Palestine as daughters of Jerusalem. These higher units were not man-made only. They were the necessary expression of a unity which transcends the local church, because in each of these local churches the one Church of Christ was existing. What bound the churches of the New Testament together was not only a human solidarity, the human desire to help each other, but the strong conviction that they were bound together in the *koinonia tou somatos Christou*, this *soma* being not an organization, not an "organism" of which the individual churches were members—according to the NT members of the Church are always the believers, not groups or congregations or bodies on a provincial level. Each local Church, if it is really Church of Christ, is "Body of Christ." The Church as the mystical Body of Christ is indivisible, just as the sacramental Body of Christ is indivisible, each communicant receiving the undivided body, as the Lutheran Church has always taught (comp. Luther's Last Confession and hymns like "*Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele*"). Thus not only practical considerations, but serious theological reasons, based on the New Testament, make it impossible to separate the fellowship between local churches from the fellowship between the church bodies to which they belong. To put it bluntly: Altar and pulpit fellowship between a congregation of the ALC and a congregation of Missouri or between two congregations in Australia of the UELCA and the ELCA, cannot be established unless the church bodies to which they belong have fellowship. Selective fellowship is unbiblical.

5. To understand that better we have to ask what church fellowship is. The English word "fellowship" does not render the deep and unique meaning of the NT *koinonia, communio.* This *koinonia* is a divine fact, an article of faith: "*Credo . . . sanctorum communionem.*" As in the Creed "*sanctorum*" has the twofold meaning "holy persons" and "holy things," so the "*koinonia* of the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 16:16 f.) has the twofold meaning of the *koinonia* with the sacramental body of Christ, effected by the partaking of the one bread (loaf) and with the mystical body of Christ (see W. Elert's elaborate investigation of the whole problem in *Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft*). The *koinonia* existing between all true believers cannot be compared with any form of human "fellowship." It is, and 1 John 1 makes it clear, always at the same time *koinonia* with the Father and with the Son. It is rooted in the *koinonia* which exists within the blessed Trinity. This is the true "fellowship" which cannot be established by men, not by congregations and church bodies, but which can only be believed. We believe that this fellowship exists wherever the true Church of Christ exists, the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the *ecclesia stricte dicta* which is hidden to human eyes, which God alone sees. We believe this hidden church (*"abscondita est ecclesia, latent sancti,"* as Luther puts

it in *De servo arbitrio*, comp. Apol. ad CA 7/8). We know that this *koinonia* is a reality, not only in our Church, but in all Christendom wherever true believers are, whom God alone knows. But as this Church—we should avoid speaking of a visible side—must be believed where the *notae ecclesiae* are present, the pure preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments according to Christ's institution, we are bound to recognize the existence of that *koinonia* wherever we find the *notae ecclesiae*, the marks of the true Church. Church fellowship between congregations (e.g., within a synod) or church bodies in the sense of inter-communion practiced in the *ecclesia late dicta* ("*societas externarum rerum ac rituum*") if not the divine *koinonia* itself, but rather the recognition that we believe that *koinonia* to be present. The *koinonia proper* is invisible, just as the Body of Christ is invisible. The establishment or practice of the *communicatio in sacris* is a human action, the human recognition of the presence of the divine *koinonia* and its practical application.

6. Since the days of the apostles the practice of the *communicatio in sacris* has been regarded as that which really establishes church fellowship. Altar fellowship is church fellowship (1 Cor. 10:16 f.) and vice versa. Altar and pulpit fellowship is the highest expression of church fellowship, irrespective of organizational consequences. It is one of the most serious misunderstandings of the biblical and Lutheran doctrine on the Church to assume that a merger is the real establishment of church union which may be preceded by the declaration of altar and pulpit fellowship, a misunderstanding born of a mere sociological understanding of the Church. How seriously this identity of church fellowship and altar fellowship was taken in the Church of the New Testament is shown by the epistles of Paul, Peter and John. The greetings at the end of the epistles are not greetings in the ordinary sense, expressing human relationships. They are solemn expressions of the existing unity, declarations or reaffirmations of the *communicatio in sacris*, as the admonition to greet one another with the "holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20), the "kiss of charity" (1 Peter 5:14), the *Pax*, as it later was called. This kiss, expressing the full peace and unity of the Church, had its place at the beginning of "Holy Communion" already in the apostolic age, as the fact shows that the formula "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (1 Cor. 16; Rev. 22:21) or its trinitarian form (2 Cor. 13:13) has remained in the Eastern Church the beginning of the dialogue leading to the Preface and Sanctus. The "Pax" is already in the New Testament connected with the "Anathema" of those who do not love the Lord (schismatics), 1 Cor. 16:22; or who "cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine" of the apostles (heretics), and therefore must be avoided, Rom. 16:17f. comp. the corresponding warnings Gal. 1:8; 1 Tim. 6:3-6, 20; Titus 3:10; 1 John 4:1 ff; 2 John 10f. The heretical doctrines are doctrines which destroy the Gospel, Judaistic confusion of Law and Gospel in the earlier epistles of Paul (Gal., Col.), syncretistic gnosticism in the Pastorals, denial of the true incarnation in John. But any doctrine which contradicts the apostolic teaching and thus is bound to destroy the true Gospel and the Church is such a heresy. Paul, like every missionary, has great patience with immature Christians who have still to grow into the full understanding of the Gospel. Thus with great patience he argues with the people at Corinth who denied the resurrection of the body, an idea so strange to Greeks, as also Acts 17:32 shows. He refutes the errors existing in Corinth concerning the Lord's Supper. He would have dealt differently with these people, had they insisted on their errors and proclaimed them as truth contrary to Paul's doctrine. Even a heretic is to be excommunicated only after the first and second admonition (Tit. 3:10). A heretic has to be avoided, as John understood it in the case of the deniers of the incarnation even in private life. The tradition of John's last admonition "Little children, love ye one another" and of his refusal to be in the same house with Cerinthus is an excellent illustration of the way how for him love for Christ and strict rejection of heresy belong together. The strong language which Luther sometimes used when criticizing heretics has often been regarded as a deplorable and unchristian lack of love. He and the great champions of orthodoxy in all ages have followed the example of the apostles (e.g., "serving their belly," Rom. 16:18, cp. Phil. 3:19, where probably the same heretics are meant as Rom. 16:17 f., since Phil. was written in Rome). We do not say that to excuse Luther's every expression or similar utterances and ways of speech in dogmatic controversies. We only want to state how abominable to the apostles (as also to the Old Testament prophets) the rejection of God's Word was. "Serving the belly" is, by the way, a very true and not only picturesque description of men for whom theology is a means of satisfying their own desire for fame and an easy life (comp. the profound description of sin in its various aspects, 1 John 2:16).

The Church in all ages up to the 17th century always has seen fellowship between Christians as fellowship between the churches to which the individuals belong.

7. If thus the establishment of *communicatio in sacris* and the *excommunicatio haereticorum* belong together as two sides of one and the same thing—see the condemnations of heresies which follow, or are implicitly contained in, every confession of faith—then the establishment or refusal of altar fellowship becomes such a serious issue that such a decision can be made only in view of the Last Judgment, since every confession of faith and every action based on the confession has consequences which stretch into eternity and involve eternal salvation and eternal condemnation (Matth. 10:32 f.). Here lies the deeper reason why the Church has never left this decision to the individual Christian. Already in the New Testament the *communicatio in sacris* is a *communio* of the churches. The Churches of Asia are in fellowship with the Church of Corinth and the Church of

Rome. The fellowship which the individual Christians in the various churches have is contained in and derived from the fellowship between the *ecclesiae*. This is evident from Rom. 16, where Paul "greets" many individual Christians and groups of Christians (probably in the various house-churches of the big city) "in the Lord," that means in the communion of the Church which is the Body of Christ. Thus these greetings lead up to the admonition to greet one another with that liturgical kiss which expresses and confirms the full unity and peace of the church. From the biblical facts it must be understood that the Church in all ages up to the 17th century always has seen fellowship between Christians as fellowship between the churches to which the individuals belong. There was never such a thing as private practice of inter-communion, never something like "selective fellowship," which is an invention of modern Americans. Elert in his last book, mentioned above, gives a convincing proof of this for the Ancient Church. Many more examples could be added to those collected by him. There have been borderline cases, e.g., in that period when the separation between Arianism and Orthodoxy took place in a slow development. But as soon as the separation was final, inter-communion ceased. The Visigoth ambassador to the Frankish court at Poitiers before 583 A.D. attended Sunday service in the Catholic Church. But he never went to Holy Communion. Not the personal conviction of the individual minister or layman decided the question whether or not intercommunion was possible, but solely the membership in a particular church. The schism between

Our American brethren are losing rapidly what their fathers had learned.

East and West developed in a slow process. It could happen that the Church of Rome was still in fellowship with the Church of Kiev, but not with the Church of Constantinople. Even in such a period of transition intercommunion was determined by church membership, not by the views of the individual. One must never forget that only in the 17th century the corporative idea of the Church was slowly being replaced by a religious individualism. Zwingli would never have been able to establish church fellowship with the Anabaptists. He wanted fellowship with the Lutherans because he did not regard the difference concerning the Lord's Supper as church-divisive. There was no intercommunion between the churches adhering to the Tetrapolitana and the Churches of the Augsburg Confession, until in 1536 Butzer and the other delegates of the South German cities accepted the Wittenberg Concord and the Augsburg Confession, not for themselves only, but on behalf of their churches. After this had been done, on the following Sunday Butzer preached and received Holy Communion at Wittenberg. Altar and pulpit fellowship had been established between churches, and this made it possible to the individuals to practise it. When this acceptance of the CA by Strassburg became known at Zuerich, the Church of Zuerich at once advised the students who went to Strassburg no longer to attend Holy Communion at Strassburg. The principle was abolished only in the 17th century in the Reformed Churches when they at the Synod of Charenton (1631) declared that they would admit Lutherans to the Lord's Table. "Syncretism" (*syncretismus* was at the time of the Reformation the technical term for what later was called "union" or "intercommunion") in Lutheran Germany, latitudinarianism in England paved the way for the destruction of the old principles which took place when Pietism and Rationalism destroyed the understanding of the Church and of the sacraments. The confessional revival which went through Christendom since 1830 helped to restore, more or less, the idea that altar fellowship is church fellowship and can be practised only where doctrinal agreement exists. In the national and territorial churches of European, and especially German, Lutheranism the restoration of the old doctrine and the practice was only partly possible after the largest Lutheran Church of the world, the Lutheran Church in Prussia, had accepted the union. Even where, as in Bavaria at the time of the old Erlangen school and W. Löhe, the theoretical principle was recognized, it proved to be impossible in the long run to practice what *de jure* was established. While in Europe Lutheranism, with the exception of the small Free Churches, had to be satisfied with a legal status which could no longer be put into practice, the Lutheran Churches in America and Australia had the freedom to establish the old practice, as far as they were desirous to do so. Thus in the 19th century American Lutheranism became the stronghold of the old confessional principle, though also there various views were held as to the application of the generally recognized principle that altar and pulpit fellowship is church fellowship. However, it seems that in our days our American brethren are losing rapidly what their fathers had learned in that respect from Löhe, Walther and Krauth. We do not say that by way of an uncharitable criticism, but we must state this historic fact in order to understand the situation of Lutheranism in the world and to think over all possibilities of redeeming this situation, as far as this is in the power of men.

8. One of the most significant events in the history of American Lutheranism was the meeting of the "General Council" at Galesburg, 1875. Three years before, the Council had accepted at Akron, Ohio, a statement of its president, Dr. Krauth, on altar and pulpit fellowship which since then has become famous under the name "Galesburg Rule." The Akron text is an attempt to solve the problem of reconciling the strict confessional principle with the actual situation prevailing in the member synods of the Council, and it is worthwhile to have a look at it in order to understand the action which has now been taken by the ALC. "1. The rule is: Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran ministers only; Lutheran altars are for Lutheran communicants only. 2. The exceptions to the rule belong to the sphere of privilege and not of right. 3. The determination of the exceptions is to be made in consonance with these principles by the conscientious judgment of pastors, as the cases arise." The meeting of Galesburg made an insertion into the first paragraph, the definite form of which was now: "The rule, which accords with the Word of God

and with the confessions of our church, is . . . .” This caused a controversy, which went on for years, on the questions whether exceptions according to Scripture and Confessions are possible and who should be regarded as a Lutheran. For the statement that all “major Lutheran bodies in America . . . bear properly the name Lutheran” leaves the question open whether this applies also to those which do not agree with that paragraph of the Galesburg rule. I know of Lutheran churches in America where everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Son of God is admitted to the altar, to say nothing of pulpit fellowship. And what about the churches within the Lutheran World Federation which grant the full right—not only a privilege, like Sweden, Denmark, Holland—of altar fellowship and even of participation in the government of the church to non-Lutherans, even to Calvinists (e.g., Brazil and other churches in Latin America, Italy, England, German territorial churches, etc.) Obviously the ALC recognizes also them as Lutheran. In what sense, then, would the ALC still recognize the principle of Galesburg? If the authorities of the ALC or the growing new merger church cannot answer the question, how, then, can they expect the individual pastors and congregations to be able to do that? If the faculties of Capital and Dubuque have no answer, how should their graduates in the ministry have one, let alone the laymen in their congregations? Thus we must say that “Selective Fellowship” is no solution of the problem of Lutheran unity, least of all of the difficult question of possible “exceptions” from the rule: “altar fellowship is church fellowship.”

9. Are there exceptions from this rule? We do not ask whether such exceptions have been made. This, of course, has been the case very often. In the 17th century it still happened that in monasteries Roman Catholics and Lutherans prayed together the canonical hours for legal and economic reasons, namely, to maintain the endowment and the privileges of such institution, which actually was no longer a real cloister. The problem is whether the rule that forbids *communicatio in sacris cum schismaticis* and *haereticis* is *de jure divino* or only *de jure humano*. We have shown that it is an apostolic injunction, a doctrine of Holy Scripture, and therefore binding on the Church. If altar fellowship is church fellowship according to the New Testament, then nobody can be admitted to the Lord’s Supper who has separated himself from the Church either by schism or by heresy. The tragic situation of our time that many church bodies exist side by side, each of which claims to be Church of Christ, has actually prevailed already in the Ancient Church since the Apostolic Age, as the New Testament shows. If we think of the controversy between Paul and the Judaists we find it even in the very beginnings of the Church. Already at the time of Paul and John a person who wanted to join the Church had to choose between several bodies each of which claimed to be the true church, just as the people in Jerusalem had to make up their minds as to whether Jeremiah or the prophets whom he called liars and false prophets preached the true Word of God. Faith is always a venture. Even the most conscientious decision may come from an erring conscience. A person may decide to make no decision at all. This, however, is still worse. Doubt can never be a substitute for faith, and no man can live without faith, whatever the object of this faith may be (see Luther’s explanation of the First Commandment in the Large Catechism). The deepest secret of man’s existence is hidden in these facts.

“Open Communion” is no communion at all; it is not the sacrament of the New Testament.

There can be no doubt that the New Testament demands from us that we distinguish between true doctrine and false doctrine, between church and heresy. It is quite clear that this implies that there is no exception from the rule that altar fellowship is church fellowship. At all times admission to the Lord’s Supper has been understood as the “conclusive action” by which a person testifies that he belongs to the church where he receives Holy Communion. In case he did not belong to it thus far he joins it by partaking in the sacrament. “Open Communion” is no communion at all; it may be a fascinating rite, a religious experience, but it is not the sacrament of the New Testament. There is only one border-line case. This is the immediate danger of death. In the First World War it has happened that in desolate prison camps of Siberia a Catholic chaplain, himself a prisoner, has given Holy Communion to dying Protestants who confessed their belief in the Real Presence. Similar cases are reported from Silesia at the time after the last war when no Protestant minister was available. The border-line in these cases is the border-line between time and eternity. On the battlefield, or in similar cases of emergency when death is imminent, a minister of Christ may decide that he ought not to refuse the sacrament to a person who believes in Christ as his Saviour and wants to receive in faith and penitence that which Christ has sacrificed for him at Calvary, His true body and His true blood, before he passes from this world to the judgment seat of God. The pastor will do that on his own responsibility and the Church will approve of that, though in this case she has no right of dispensation. We have to ask for Christ’s own dispensation, knowing that He will not refuse it. This is no “exception,” no “selective fellowship,” and cannot be used to abolish the rule.

10. If the rule “Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran ministers only, Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only” must be regarded as a correct application of the New Testament doctrine that altar fellowship is church fellowship, it must be accepted—if not verbally, then at least substantially—by all Lutheran Churches.

Is that still the case? We have mentioned some examples of churches which claim to be Lutheran, but would no longer accept the first paragraph of the Galesburg rule. Will this process be going on? Can it be stopped? Can we persuade our fellow-Lutherans to reconsider the decisions they have taken in the direction of intercommunion with non-Lutheran churches? Or are perhaps all Lutherans going the same way? It is a

remarkable fact that not only men of a younger generation do no longer follow their fathers—this could be explained as a natural process—but that even mature men, sometimes old churchmen and theologians who for a life-time have upheld the confessional standards against unionism, suddenly become champions of what they always had strongly opposed. We who have observed the great revolutions and mass movements of this century in Europe know of such strange phenomena of a revolutionary age when the tremendous changes going on in human society reflect themselves in changes which occur in the depth of an individual soul, transforming it in a way that defies psychological explanation. Also the history of the Church shows such phenomena. In view of them probably must be understood the apostolic admonitions "to be steadfast, unmoveable" (1 Cor. 15:58) and not to be "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). Sometimes it seems that a profound crisis of the Lutheran faith is hiding behind the astonishing rise of World Lutheranism in its outward appearance. What actually do we mean when calling a person or a church "Lutheran"? The fathers of the Galesburg Declaration still knew what a Lutheran Church was: a church in which the Augsburg Confession was not only nominally recognized, but was really the *norma docendi* under the Word of God. Also at that time there were differences of opinion as to whether or not in certain cases this norm was adhered to in doctrine and practice. But there was general agreement as to the binding character of the confession. Its great doctrinal decisions, e.g., as to the Real Presence, were regarded as being *extra controversiam*. What has happened that now doctrines which till then were confessed *magno consensu* have become open questions? What does the word "Lutheran" mean in the documents of the Lutheran World Federation, or in the resolution of the ALC?

To use the celebration of the sacrament as a means to create a unity which does not exist should be impossible in a Lutheran Church which knows for what purpose the Sacrament of the Altar has been instituted.

Thus we are confronted with the great task to re-think our confessional heritage. We owe it to our own fellow-Lutherans and to all Christians to clarify our thoughts. What is a Lutheran Church? What is the unity of Lutheranism which we seek? In what sense do we still not only subscribe to, but actually confess the confessions to our fathers? What does the "*Damnamus*" mean which we must speak against every heresy wherever it may appear, even in our own church? For the border-line between truth and error, between Church and heresy, goes also right through the churches which call themselves "Lutheran." If we have to reject an error and to warn against a heretical doctrine which is threatening or destroying the Gospel, we can do that only in the spirit of deep humility and self-examination, remembering the heart-searching question: "Is it I?" If we refuse intercommunion, we can do it only with profound sorrow, not as the *beati possidentes*, but as poor sinners who are entrusted by the Lord of the church with the task to preserve, not for ourselves only, but for the whole of Christendom, His sacrament, as He has instituted it.

11. Thus "selective fellowship" is not the answer to the problem of Lutheran unity. Not only such fellowship, but also the term should be avoided. It is misleading and can not even be justified by the fact that within one and the same church a person may be compelled by his conscience to avoid the sacrament of a minister whose doctrine is doubtful or even false, as Luther has made it clear in his letter to the Christians at Frankfurt in 1532. How can we lay the grave burden of deciding whether or not *communio in sacris* can be practised with members or congregations of another church body, on our pastors and laymen as long as even our bishops, church presidents and theological scholars cannot tell them what the unity of the Lutheran Church is which we are seeking? And to use the celebration of the sacrament as a means to create a unity which does not exist, this abuse of the sacrament in modern Protestantism which we always have criticized, should be impossible in a Lutheran Church which knows for what purpose the Sacrament of the Altar has been instituted.

What, then, is the proper and promising way which leads to unity? Is it the continued negotiation between the Church councils and union committees? Is it the theological discussion between faculties, theological committees and individual scholars? Is it the theological work done either by organisations like the Department of Theology of the LWF or by free conferences like those of Bad Boll? The answer must be: All this is necessary. We must make use of every possible means and explore all avenues. The work of creating true unity between Lutherans must be the work of the entire church. Not the presidents and church councils alone can do it, nor the theologians, nor the laymen. The entire church must set out to work for unity. The apparent failure of so many serious attempts is mainly due to the fact that we are always inclined to expect too much from one part of the Church, be it the bishops or synods, committees, pastors, laymen, theological scholars, women, young people. We must look at the whole. This does not mean that our entire church bodies, from kindergarten to the faculties, from the church councils to the youth societies, should become discussion clubs. It rather means that every member of the Church fulfils his duty at his "station," his *Stand* in Luther's sense. The church leaders must do their share in patient negotiations, the theologians must do their hard work of research, disputation and teaching. The "station" of the students demands careful studying. Thus every member of the Church has his station with its particular duties. In a Lutheran Church the emphasis on the universal priesthood of all believers makes it compulsory for every layman to work for his church, which cannot be done

without a careful training, without a serious study of the Bible and the Catechisms. There is the great duty of parents to teach their children. The solemn promise made at the baptism of their children does not mean only to allow others to teach them. There is no substitute for the instruction of God's Word and in the catechism by faithful fathers and mothers. Thus every "station" is connected with duties, even the station of those who as aged or sick people can do no more that pray—the greatest and hardest work in the Church. God has not yet given us a revival of the Lutheran faith as it was experienced in the first half of the 19th century, that great revival from which our churches live still today. Nor can we expect that through a great miracle true unity between Lutherans will suddenly come about. The unity of the Lutheran Church can come only if our churches return to the diligent use of the means of grace, to a serious study of the Word of God and the confessions of the Reformation. And this must be done in all "stations" of the Church. Our Church leaders must become better theologians and, in a time when the burden of administrative work makes it in all Christendom almost impossible to combine administration and scholarship as it was still possible in the 19th century, have theological advice. In the Roman Church it is a strict rule that each diocesan chapter must have a "*canonicus theologus*." The professors of theology again must have not only ecclesiastical experience, but must live and work in close contact with the pastors and congregation. Otherwise they will teach an abstract theology which does not help the Church. All great theologians have been able to express, if necessary, the profoundest thoughts in such simple language that the congregation could understand them. The hymns and prayers of Thomas Aquinas are still today used by the people, and Luther's catechisms are masterpieces of a profound theology which can be understood by any Christian, even by children. Just as the church government deteriorates into mere church politics if it is not based on sound and profound theology, so the theologian who loses contact with the real life of the church becomes a mere theoretical scholar who speaks of God like a shoemaker of his leather, as Luther has characterized that professionalism which is the danger of all theology. The pastors who have no solid theological training and are not studying any longer become mere organisers, and their sermons or "sermonettes" cease to be the preaching of the pure Gospel. The lay people who do not live up to the divine "station" which they have in virtue of the universal priesthood may become good business managers in congregation and synod, church council and committee, but what they are building is not a Christian congregation in the sense of the New Testament and the Lutheran Confessions. It is rather a sort of religious society, a society for the furthering of religious interests. They may be well-meaning, pious people, eager to build the "Kingdom," but they know neither what the Kingdom of God, nor what the Church of Christ is. They do not realize that it is God's kingdom which we cannot build, that it is the Church of Christ who by His Gospel and His sacraments builds His Church. If these men try to establish church unity, they can think only in terms of human sociology. They do not know that the unity of the Church is something totally different from the unity existing in a merely human society.

Thus the one and only way to find unity is the rediscovery of the nature of the Church, the transformation, with the help of God, of our secularized churches, synods and congregations into a true Church which lives by the power of the Gospel and of Christ's sacraments. Everyone of us must return to that "station" which God has given us. Then our lives will be integrated into the life of the true Church, and we shall experience that where the true church is, in local congregation, synod or church body, the unity which we seek is given us from above. There is no other way: *Ubi ecclesia, ibi unitus.* LOGIA

Hermann Sasse
Prospect, South Australia
August, 1957

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
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The Other Story of Lutherans at Worship?

Rick Stuckwisch

Ostensibly, David S. Luecke's article "The Other Story of Lutherans at Worship"[1] has for itself a worthwhile purpose. There are at least two very different and oftentimes opposed approaches to the history and theology of Lutheran worship. In so significant a matter it surely would have been helpful to have an objective comparison of the relevant data with its various interpretations. Regretfully, what Luecke has provided instead is a rather lopsided "story," which is both skewed and slanted. Although he makes a pretense of objectivity, he is clearly not objective in his handling of sources and historical facts. Of course, it is no crime for Luecke to take sides in this issue; each theologian must have his own opinion, and so much the better if he sticks to his guns. But it is a shame that Luecke has chosen to mask his position with a feigned impression of historicity.

A truly thorough review and critique of Luecke's article would require a rather extensive rebuttal. Ideally, hours of careful research and a gathering of reliable sources, both primary and secondary, would be needed to retell the "stories" of Lutherans at worship. It was precisely this sort of scholarly work that was either neglected in the preparation of Luecke's article, or else purposefully omitted from its presentation. For the sake of brevity, we will not attempt to do here what should have been done with the article in question. Rather, we will highlight and consider some of the historical, theological, and methodological problems that permeate Luecke's effort.

The goal of Luecke's article is the comparison of a so-called "Restoration Story" of Lutheran worship with an alternative "Other Story." By the "Restoration Story," Luecke refers to a "decades-long, even century-long struggle to restore Lutheran worship from a corrupted state to its original glory" (10). He defines the "Other Story" as the ongoing adaptation of Lutheran worship practices to meet the needs of diverse congregations and church bodies, and to facilitate "the mission they chose" (10).

Although Luecke claims that *both* "stories" are important for an understanding of Lutheran worship (10), and that both have their problems, villains, and confusions (10, 11), his article presents the "Restoration Story" in dark and gray tones, and the "Other Story" in glowing colors. At times, Luecke's personal biases are particularly obvious. For instance, he describes the radical reforms of Karlstadt in 1522 as an effort "to return to more basic spiritual life and worship" (11). It is safe to say that Luther—who risked his life by returning to Wittenberg for the purpose of putting a stop to Karlstadt's anarchy—would not have been so charitable in his description of those reforms! Luecke also betrays a fondness for Pietism. Thus, after noting that the Pietism of the seventeenth century introduced informality in worship practices, he comments that today "many worship leaders are learning to see informality as a strength rather than a weakness" (11; see also 15). Luecke has nothing at all good to say about Lutheran Orthodoxy (11).

A particular weakness of the article is Luecke's exclusive reliance on an abbreviated summary of Luther Reed for the so-called Restoration Story. We certainly do not wish to belittle the monumental contribution of Reed's *The Lutheran Liturgy* (1947, 1959). Reed's theological premises and analyses, however, do not exhaust the opinions of those whom Luecke would group together under the "Restoration" umbrella. Numerous other sources suggest themselves, though Luecke has mentioned none of these: Peter Brunner's *Worship in the Name of Jesus,* Wilhelm Hahn's *Worship and Congregation,* Friedrich Kalb's *Theology of Worship in 17th-Century Lutheranism,* Regin Prenter's *Theologie und Gottesdienst,* and more recently, *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice,* edited by Fred Precht (LCMS), Philip Pfatteicher's *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship* (ELCA), and *Christian Worship: Manual,* edited by Baumler and Moldenhauer (WELS). In Luecke's own words, "the more one-sided a story is, the more important it is to look farther" (13). But of course his presentation of the "Restoration Story" is necessarily one-sided, since he relies on Reed alone. By the same token, Luecke's own telling of the "Other Story" is at least as one-sided, if not more so.

By focusing exclusively on Reed's telling of the "Restoration Story," Luecke also ignores the special developments and history of worship in the Missouri Synod. Lost therefore are the contributions and genius of men like C. F. W. Walther and Wilhelm Löhe. According to Luecke, referring to the nineteenth-century Lutheran mission to North America, "of necessity pastors and church leaders concentrated on the spiritual basics of personal salvation and spiritual security," "worship was simple and to the point," and "ritual was a secondary concern" (14). While these attitudes might have been held by some early American Lutherans (Samuel Schmucker comes to mind), they do not reflect the views of Walther and Löhe, both of whom produced conservative liturgical books for Lutherans in the United States. Löhe's *Liturgy for Christian Congregations of the Lutheran Faith* (available in English translation from Repristination Press, 1993) was prepared at the specific request of a truly zealous Lutheran missionary, Friedrich Wyneken, to whom Löhe dedicated the first edition of his liturgy.

In spite of frequent appeals to Luther throughout the article, Luecke includes no citations from Luther's writings, nor any direct or specific references. Rather, he relies on sweeping (and

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often unfounded) statements concerning "what Luther thought." (We shall try, as far as possible in this essay, to let Luther himself refute some of the assertions made about him.) Equally disturbing in an article that claims to set forth a normative Lutheran attitude toward worship is the striking paucity of references to the Lutheran Confessions (or, for that matter, to the Holy Scriptures). The confessional writings of our church are certainly not silent on the theology and practice of the Divine Service, and they ought to provide the foundation and starting point for any discussion of how Lutherans worship. Yet Luecke has only *one* reference to the Lutheran Confessions, a brief extract from FC X. Not surprisingly, this greatly misunderstood and often misused article of the Confessions is quoted out of context in a way that is quite misleading. Citing FC, Luecke defines what he calls "the basic principle of Lutheran worship" as the "right, authority, and power to change, reduce or to increase ceremonies" (14). This statement from the Formula is certainly a Lutheran truism, which few *if any* have ever denied. It is *not*, however, "the basic principle of Lutheran worship," as Luecke maintains. The basic principle of Lutheran worship is, rather, an emphasis on the coming of God to us in Christ with his divine service (*Gottesdienst*) of forgiveness, and the absolute necessity and centrality of the gospel—word and sacraments—those incarnational means of grace by which alone faith is created and sustained.

With respect to Luther's personal theology, Luecke has confined himself to a handful of secondary sources.

As for the Formula of Concord, the whole purpose of Article X is to qualify the very statement that Luecke cites. It is not at all the case that "anything goes" in worship. First of all, we should finish the sentence, which Luecke cuts off. It reads in full as follows:

> We believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the right, authority, and power to change, to reduce, or to increase ceremonies according to its circumstances, *as long as it does so without frivolity and offense but in an orderly and appropriate way, as at any time may seem to be the most profitable, beneficial, and salutary for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the edification of the Church* (FC SD X, 9, Tappert, 612; emphasis added to highlight Luecke's omission).

Thus according to the Formula of Concord the freedom of ceremonies is used rightly when it is used to promote *order* and *discipline*! What is more, certain aspects of worship are not at all free or subject to change. Some things are expressly commanded by God, namely, the proclamation of the gospel and the correct administration of the sacraments in conformity with the gospel. Other things are expressly forbidden, namely, any compromise of the gospel or lessening of the glory due to Christ alone. Beyond these clear black-and-white's of worship, historical circumstances can sometimes demand a less flexible attitude toward practices that otherwise would be free. That is to say, in some situations, such as the one obtaining at the time of the Formula of Concord, "adiaphora" (those things neither commanded nor forbidden by God) are no longer a matter of freedom. Rather, certain rites and practices are required or restricted, because of the public confession that is made by their use or omission. (See especially FC SD X, 5–7, 10–17, Tappert, 611–614.)[2]

Ironically, this understanding of *adiaphora* set forth in the Formula of Concord is especially applicable in the case of David Luecke. His suggestion that Lutherans ought to adopt a distinctively "Evangelical style" (as advocated in his book *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance*[3] is subject to criticism precisely on this basis. Lutherans are not "Evangelicals" in the modern, Protestant-American sense of that term, and they must avoid any suggestion or impression that they are. Already in the nineteenth century the founders of the Missouri Synod recognized the dangers of adopting Protestant worship practices, as they make clear (along with other related points) in the first Synodical Constitution:

> Synod holds in accordance with the 7th article of the Augsburg Confession that uniformity in ceremonies is not essential; yet on the other hand Synod deems such a uniformity wholesome and useful, namely for the following reasons:
>
> (a) because a total difference in outward ceremonies would cause those who are weak in the unity of doctrine to stumble;
> (b) because in dropping heretofore preserved usages the Church is to avoid the appearance of and desire for innovations;
>
> Furthermore Synod deems it necessary for the purification of the Lutheran Church in America, that the emptiness and the poverty in the externals of the service be opposed, which, having been introduced here by the false spirit of the Reformed, is now rampant.
>
> All pastors and congregations that wish to be recognized as orthodox by Synod are prohibited from adopting or retaining any ceremony which might weaken the confession of the truth or condone or strengthen a heresy, especially if heretics insist upon the continuation or the abolishing of such ceremonies.[4]

Thankfully, the Missouri Synod remains committed to these principles, as indicated by the resolutions passed with sizable majorities at the 1995 Synodical Convention in St. Louis (see especially Resolutions 2–06, 2–07, 3–09, and 3–14a).

With respect to Luther's personal theology, Luecke has confined himself to a handful of secondary sources, and here there are some serious deficiencies. E. G. Schwiebert is cited once, and Franz Lau is cited twice, but there are no references to any of the standard Luther studies of our day: Althaus, Bornkamm, Brecht, Kittelson, von Loewenich, Oberman, and even Bainton—all of these are conspicuously absent. Luecke does make several references to the English translation of Vilmos Vajta's classic *Luther on Worship,* but these are all taken from a single chapter of the two-hundred-page book. More disturbing still is the disingenuous

selectivity of citations, which carefully avoids material in Vajta that greatly qualifies the phrases that Luecke lifts out of context. Two examples will demonstrate what we have in mind.

At one point, Luecke appeals to Vajta in making the claim that Luther was conservative in liturgical matters only because of his "strong love for the people weak in faith who were already experiencing chaos in the Reformation; they did not need any more externalities changed on them than necessary" (13). Vajta, however, begins his discussion with the comment: "*This world* needs order and form. And so does our worship here."[5] These opening remarks from Vajta set into context the meaning of Luther's love. It is a love that requires order and form, not only for the "people weak in faith," as Luecke suggests, but for all of our neighbors and fellow-men.

When Luecke next refers to Vajta, he indicates that "Luther was also skeptical about working out a church constitution in detail for fear other churches would adopt it and thus disregard existing customs within the congregation and would fail to adapt to the given situation, perhaps even succumbing to legalism" (14). In this case, Vajta also writes:

> Luther sought to avoid needless and senseless changes in the order of worship. In order to prevent confusion, he called for conformity among churches of the same region, and for a consistent observance of the order once it had been adopted. His principle of love and regard for the common man made him the sworn enemy of arbitrary changes. In fact, he favored a wider degree of uniformity, as long as evangelical freedom could be maintained.[6]

Here we find a very different side to Vajta's interpretation of Luther, a side totally hidden and ignored by Luecke. Even Vajta's footnote on church constitutions, which Luecke cites as evidence for Luther's aversion to externals, includes this remark (omitted by Luecke): "[Luther] thought that unwritten customs should first be established before *being made binding by precepts and law.*"[7]

Other sources used in Luecke's article are Werner Elert's *The Structure of Lutheranism* and James White's *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition*. These sources, like Vajta, are treated with the same sort of selectivity we have already seen. And at this point we are beginning to anticipate a problem that will need to be addressed more fully below, namely, Luecke's objections to a frequent celebration of the eucharist. It is in this context that Elert and White are cited. In both cases a false impression is given that needs to be corrected. Luecke quotes Elert as follows: "The preaching and teaching of God's Word is the main part of all divine service" (16). A similar statement can be found, almost verbatim, in Luther's introduction to his *German Mass*, so it can hardly be called into question (see AE 53: 68). The purpose of the citation in Luecke's article, however, is an attempt to set preaching at odds with the sacrament, as though the two did not go hand-in-hand. Yet the sentence from Elert is merely the opening line of a new paragraph, in which Elert goes on to describe the centrality of the eucharist in Luther's understanding of worship.[8] Luther himself, again in the introduction to his *German Mass*, says quite pointedly, "Among Christians the whole service should center in the Word and Sacrament" (AE 53: 90).

Another deceptive impression is given by a block quotation from James White, who notes the difficulties faced by the Lutheran Church in trying to maintain a weekly eucharist in the century following the Reformation. Luecke tries to argue on the basis of the eventual erosion of a frequent celebration that the sacrament was not really central to authentic Lutheran worship in the first place. This whole argument is theologically and methodologically flawed from the start, as we shall consider in a bit. But as for the citation from White, Luecke leaves out the sentences that come immediately before and after. In fact, he cuts his citation off in mid-sentence! What then has been omitted? White actually begins by noting that "it is impossible to say exactly how frequently the Eucharist was celebrated or how many communicants appeared," a statement that qualifies the subsequent sentences, namely, those cited by Luecke. The sentence that Luecke chops in half reads in full as follows: "As a result, the first half of the service, the ante-Communion, came to be the usual Sunday celebration, the full eucharist becoming the exceptional service [at this point Luecke places a period] *despite the expectations of Luther and his contemporaries that a weekly eucharist would be normal.*" White then concludes his paragraph with the following exception, also ignored by Luecke: "Yet in places such as Leipzig weekly communion was normal for thousands of people, and daily prayer services were well attended until the last decade of the eighteenth century." These three omissions more or less speak for themselves, and they reflect poorly on Luecke's integrity.[9]

The issue of how the church relates to the culture (not a new one) still causes lively debate and controversy.

Now, a brief personal comment. Jim White is one of my professors at Notre Dame, and I count him as a friend as well. He is recognized as one of the outstanding authorities in our day on the history of the liturgy, including especially the worship traditions of the various Protestant church bodies. As much as I respect Jim's knowledge and scholarship, however, I believe that he would be the first to point out that Luther and Lutheran worship per se are not his real expertise. I find it a bit odd, therefore, that Jim White is one of the most prominent of Luecke's sources. Having made that observation, however, I would also add that Jim White is more accurate than Luecke in his interpretation of Luther.

Back to the topic at hand. In discussing Vajta above, we saw an example of Luecke's frequent distinction between those who are "weak in faith" and (presumably) "normal" Christians. It is true that Luther often speaks in similar terms, but it is usually clear from the context that he is speaking tongue-in-cheek, and that, in fact, he regards *all* of us as "weak in faith." One typical example will illustrate this point. In his Sermon on Private Confession of March 1522 (one of the eight sermons at Wittenberg that Luther preached against Karlstadt and his radical reforms), Luther speaks as follows: "One who has a strong, firm faith that his sins

are forgiven may let this Confession go and confess to God alone. *But how many of us have such a strong faith?* Therefore, as I have said, I will not let this Private Confession be taken from me" (AE 51: 99; emphasis added).

For Luther, there is really no such thing as a Christian who has become so strong in his faith that he no longer needs a liturgical order and the means of grace. As U. S. Leupold writes in the introduction to Volume 53 of AE: "Luther recognized that the Christian is not only a righteous man, but also a sinner. His faith is not a static, but a growing, struggling thing. Therefore, he needs the daily nurture and exercise in the Word as provided in the Church's liturgy, and even though he might not need it for himself, he must provide it for others" (xvi). Or in Luther's own words, from the introduction to his *German Mass*:

> We prepare such orders [of worship] not for those who already are Christians; for they need none of them. And we do not live [and work] for them; but they live for us who are not yet Christians so that they may make Christians out of us. Their worship is in the spirit. But such orders are needed for those who are still becoming Christians or need to be strengthened, since a Christian does not need Baptism, the Word, and the Sacrament as a Christian—for all these things are his—but as a sinner. They are essential especially for the immature and the young who must be trained and educated in the Scripture and God's Word daily (AE 53: 62).

Thus Luecke's observation about Luther's loving concern for the people, who "did not need any more externalities changed on them than necessary" (13), still holds true, especially in the case of missions and evangelism. New and young Christians, in particular, need as much consistency and continuity as possible from Sunday to Sunday. Yet Luecke makes the bald claim that "Luther feared uniformity" in worship practices (14). This statement is so misleading as to border on falsehood. As we have already learned from Vajta, what Luther really feared and constantly warned against was the *enforcement* of uniformity, which would turn the gospel into the law. In fact, Luther strongly advocates the stability and uniformity of worship practices within any given principality, so long as it is not obtained by force or law. Again from the introduction to his *German Mass:*

> Where the people are perplexed and offended by . . . differences in liturgical usage . . . we are certainly bound to forego our freedom and seek, if possible, to better rather than to offend them by what we do or leave undone . . . As far as possible we should observe the same rites and ceremonies, just as all Christians have the same Baptism and the same Sacrament [of the Altar] and no one has received a special one of his own from God. . . . I do not propose that all of Germany should uniformly follow our Wittenberg order. Even heretofore the chapters, monasteries, and parishes were not alike in every rite. But it would be well if the service in every principality would be held in the same manner and if the order observed in a given city would also be followed by the surrounding towns and villages; whether those in other principalities hold the same order or add to it ought to be a matter of free choice and not of constraint. (AE 53: 61, 62; see also *A Christian Exhortation to the Livonians Concerning Public Worship and Concord* [1525], in AE 53: 45–50; also compare Luther's comments on uniformity in his preface to the Small Catechism).

It is worth noting that Luecke twice draws attention to the fact that almost all of the many Lutheran church orders that emerged in the sixteenth century included services based on the form of the German Mass (see 11, 14). Similarly, he also indicates that even in our own century "there is something recognized as Lutheran worship that prevails across almost all expressions of Lutheranism in North America" (12). Luecke attributes these phenomena to the champions of the "Restoration Story," but it seems more fair to assume that the Church of Luther has chosen in her freedom to follow Luther's pastoral advice.

For Luther, there is really no such thing as a Christian who has become so strong in his faith that he no longer needs a liturgical order and the means of grace.

In short, what Luecke says about Luther's attitude toward worship is true to a point. But to that same extent it is misleading. It lacks Luther's trademark balance of paradox, his careful nuance and sophistication. It is true that Luther is always concerned about the dangers of liturgical legalism, but he is equally concerned about the dangers of liturgical anarchy. For Luther, creativity and innovation in worship can be as bad or worse than formalism. Indeed, he reiterates again and again that the common people, especially the young and the neophytes, require stable and consistent forms for the clarity and free course of the gospel. Thus in Luther's theology of worship the freedom of faith, which reigns in the conscience, is balanced by the servitude of love, which governs the outward Christian life.

Perhaps the single most unsettling aspect of Luecke's article is the long concluding section on the frequency of communion. We have already made some reference to his arguments against the weekly celebration of the sacrament, but further attention is needed. Not only are Luecke's presuppositions and conclusions wrong-headed; his whole approach to the topic, as indicated earlier, is theologically and methodologically flawed. In a day and age when virtually all church bodies are encouraging more frequent communion, Luecke sets out to prove that a weekly eucharist is not at all central to authentic Lutheran worship. In taking this position, he is running against the grain of his own LCMS, which adopted by a 74% majority at its most recent convention a resolution encouraging every Sunday communion in all congregations (see Res. 2–08a). While synodical conventions can be fickle and can err as easily as popes and councils, we should

rightly expect some reference to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions in Luecke's attempt to define normative Lutheran practice. Thus it is a serious flaw indeed that Luecke makes no reference whatsoever to either Scripture or the Confessions at this point. So much for *sola Scriptura.* So much for confessional integrity. Neither does Luecke argue from the personal writings of Luther, Melanchthon, or Chemnitz, nor any of the great seventeenth-century theologians of the Lutheran Church. Missing too are the contributions of the Missouri Synod founders and forefathers. Any and all of these sources would have provided a foundation for the description of Lutheran practice. But we dare say, none of them support the conclusion that Luecke wants to reach. So instead of using the true norms of Lutheran theology or the doctor-fathers of our Lutheran Church, Luecke appeals primarily to the contingencies of history. On this uncertain basis he argues that "the complete dominance [of] parish Communion on a less than weekly and usually quarterly basis during this history does leave questionable the premise that the only true Lutheran worship is the mass focused on celebration of the Lord's Supper" (16). Even if his conclusion were true, the foundation on which it stands is hardly normative for Lutheran theology.

To determine what is normative for Lutheran worship practice, Luecke asks, "How extensively did Lutherans in that golden time participate in Communion? More important, how long did this practice last?" (15). By analogy, we might also ask, "How faithful were the Children of Israel to the covenant of Mt. Sinai? How long did they remain faithful?" In either case, the unfaithfulness of sinful people does nothing to alter the immutable will of God. Otherwise, there should never have been a Reformation in the first place, and we should all return to the liturgical practices of the Middle Ages or of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, which have much longer historical precedents than any Lutheran practice.

Amazingly, Luecke also tries to argue on the basis of the daily prayer services held in Wittenberg (without identifying them for what they were), that Lutheran worship was never primarily sacramental (15)! He is right in one sense, namely, that our congregations should ideally restore the daily observance of Morning and Evening Prayer (Matins and Vespers), in addition to the weekly eucharist on Sunday. Luther strongly encouraged the practice of daily prayer, with which he replaced the private masses of the Roman priests. Luther objected to the daily *masses* (because they were used as a "sacrifice" and did not include the Holy Communion), but he also urged that the sacrament should still be made available during the week whenever desired, and the Mass should continue to be sung *every Sunday morning* (see AE 53: 11–14; also, AE 53: 68–69). If this balance between the Sunday eucharist and the Daily Office is what Luecke has in mind when he argues for alternative forms of Lutheran worship, then he has made a truly valid point. Unfortunately, we are inclined to believe that his real intention is something altogether different.

Another truly remarkable argument against frequent communion is based on the practice of the Reformed Church! First, Luecke rightly notes that John Calvin himself desired a weekly communion, but he was overruled by the elders of Geneva. Next, Luecke argues that the Reformed practice of quarterly communion was not established for theological reasons, but rather "it was something the lay leadership wanted for simplicity, and probably also to shorten the service" (16). Finally, by a most interesting slight of hand Luecke concludes that "this same mentality undoubtedly prevailed in cities where Lutheranism was dominant, with similar result" (16). When I shared this particular argument with one of my Christian Reformed colleagues at Notre Dame, he simply rolled his eyes in disbelief.

Another truly remarkable argument against frequent communion is based on the practice of the Reformed Church!

Now, having looked at Luecke's flawed argumentation against frequent communion, we must also ask the deeper question: What is at stake here for Luecke? Why is he so opposed to a weekly celebration of the eucharist? We assume in Christian charity that his motives are well-intentioned, and that his misuse and abuse of history stems more from naïveté than dishonesty. But why is this particular aspect of Lutheran worship singled out for deconstruction? Not being able to read Luecke's heart, the best we can offer is a personal guess. The problem, it seems to me, is Luecke's ardent belief that externals in worship are totally free and superfluous at best. This attitude is problematic for any number of reasons, but it runs into real trouble especially in the case of the Lord's Supper. By definition, by necessity, and by the intention of Christ, the sacrament of our Lord's body and blood is an outward, external, corporeal, tactile ceremony. Thus when Luecke cites Franz Lau concerning the freedom of "outward things" (14), he must also qualify his remarks with a reference to the *outward* character of the external word and sacraments. But Luecke does not address this factor at all. By comparison, consider Luther's response to the Zwinglians and Anabaptists, who argued against baptism on the grounds that it is an external thing. Luther writes:

> These people are so foolish as to separate faith from the object to which faith is attached and bound on the ground that the object is something external. Yes, it must be external so that it can be perceived and grasped by the senses and thus brought into the heart, just as the entire Gospel is an external, oral proclamation. In short, whatever God effects in us He does through such external ordinances (LC IV, 28, Tappert, 440).

Whenever the Lord's Supper is celebrated, it will necessarily impose a certain order and structure on the service. Furthermore, if the pure gospel character of the sacrament is respected, the order and structure of the service will hardly be free in all respects, but will be governed by the criteria of the Divine Word. Thus with weekly communion, much of the flexibility and freedom that Luecke wants to stress has already been curtailed. Thankfully, it also prevents our worship from slipping into various forms of enthusiasm and individualism.

In conclusion, it is true that the details of worship can and should change over time and in varying circumstances, just as they always have (from the earliest days of the church and long before the Reformation). The key for those who guide and direct such developments is to have a firm grasp on the necessary externals of worship and to have a clear understanding of the Christological and gospel-centered criteria by which *all* forms of worship are measured. Consistency and continuity, as well as flexibility and variation, should by all means be respected. Somehow, both the freedom of the gospel *and* the integrity of the one faith should be preserved in our worship practices. Here there is no room for ambiguity and confusion. Our worship is a confession of Christ before the world, a teacher of the faith to both old and young, and above all, the bearer of God's sacred gifts to us. That is and must remain the bottom line. LOGIA

NOTES

1. David S. Luecke, "The Other Story of Lutherans at Worship," *Worship Leader Resource* (April 1995), 10–17.
2. See also Kurt Marquart's fine essay "Article X. Confession and Ceremonies," in *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord*, ed. Robert D. Preus and Wilbert H. Rosin (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 260–270.
3. David S. Luecke, *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988).
4. W. Polack, ed., "Our First Synodical Constitution," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 16 (April 1943), 11–12.
5. Vilmos Vajta, *Luther on Worship,* trans. Ulrich S. Leupold (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958); emphasis added.
6. Ibid., 182.
7. Ibid., 182; emphasis added.
8. See Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism,* trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 324–325.
9. James White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 50; emphasis added to highlight Luecke's omission.

The Church in AC VII

An Exegetical Overview

Randy Asburry

When one considers that Article VII of the Augsburg Confession is reckoned among its "undisputed articles," the discussion, debate, and disagreement concerning this article seem somewhat out of place. For out of a brief, simple statement about the church and what is sufficient for her unity, there have arisen volumes and volumes of debate on such topics as ecclesiology, sacramental theology, ecumenism, and church fellowship. This study will give an overview of the most fundamental issues related to AC VII. First, by examining some of the literature on this article, we will begin to view the lay of the land and the contours of the ecclesiological discussions. The main focus of this study, however, will be an exegetical investigation of AC VII. Through an investigation of contextual concerns and structural analysis, this study will show that AC VII gives an essential description or definition of the church, the *Una Sancta,* and its God-given unity, rather than a prescription and call for church unity or ecumenical fellowship.

VARYING INTERPRETATIONS OF AC VII

The Church and Her Unity

Judging from a brief survey of the literature on AC VII, it becomes evident that there is some confusion as to the question at issue for this article. Is AC VII giving a definition of the church, or prescribing an ideal? How does AC VII speak to "church unity"? Of what kind of unity does AC VII speak?

One of the more prevalent trends has been to view AC VII as a call to church unity. With church bodies divided long enough by matters of heritage and doctrinal disputes, some look to AC VII as the rallying cry for ecumenical ideals and possibilities between Lutheran bodies and between Lutherans and Roman Catholics. Harding Meyer and Heinz Schütte co-authored the chapter on the church in *Confessing One Faith: A Joint Commentary on the Augsburg Confession by Lutheran and Catholic Theologians.* This joint effort examines grounds for mending the four-and-a-half-century rift between Lutherans and Catholics. Meyer and Schütte view the achievement of church unity as the dominant thought of AC VII.

> To be sure, in all of this it is decisive that the gospel be preached in its pure and genuine form and the sacraments be administered in accordance with this gospel. Where this proclamation and administration of the sacraments according to the gospel occurs, there is the church. And where agreement on this subject exists among Christians and churches, there is unity of the church and decisive prerequisites for church fellowship are fulfilled.[1]

Meyer and Schütte discuss various aspects of ecclesiology as well as AC VII and point out where there is common ground and what still hinders fellowship between Lutherans and Catholics. Obvious hindrances to fellowship are issues such as the papacy, the hierarchical nature of the Roman Church, and so-called spiritualizing tendencies stemming from AC VII.

David Truemper also illustrates the view of AC VII as a call to unity, or church fellowship. After examining FC X, Truemper deals with the ecclesiology of AC VII. His claim is that what is necessary for church unity is the gospel actually being preached and the sacraments actually being administered, without regard for correctness of doctrinal statements or understanding. Truemper concludes:

> Finally, we need to recall the situation in which the *satis est* statement is made, namely, the plea for Christian unity within the empire. . . . For all of these reasons, the seventh article of the Augsburg Confession must be understood as an attempt to confess a catholic ecclesiology and a catholic program for the preservation of the unity of the church.[2]

With an examination of and appeal to the political context of 1530, Robert C. Schultz also sees AC VII as a summons to seek, foster, and preserve church unity. "The legal context of the Diet of Augsburg in May and June 1530 therefore became the historical context of the Lutheran confessional commitment to ecumenicity."[3] Schultz's main argument is that Emperor Charles V was not interested in doctrine since he rejected the Schwabach Articles as a means of resolving the dispute. Therefore the reformers appealed to imperial law to persuade the emperor that they were not seeking to exclude the papists. When unity was not realized between papists and reformers, polemics ruled the day for the next 450 years.[4] Thus the supposition for Schultz is that modern-day Lutherans and Catholics can and must reenact the potential unification of 1530. "The question rather is whether we will all find the strength to act on the unrealized but again available potential of Augsburg in the spring and summer of 1530 and commit ourselves to the unity of the church on the basis of evangelical doctrine and apostolic discipline—leaving the latitude of

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understanding of these principles which the church lived with both before and after the western schism."[5]

Over against these views of AC VII is the understanding that the Augsburg Confession's treatment of the church is actually a definition of a given unity, *unitas,* of the church. E. Lassmann states the matter concisely.

> Does Article VII establish a high standard for fellowship or one that is minimal? I think neither, for the wrong question is being asked. Article VII sets no standard, high or low, for church fellowship because it was never intended to serve as a basis for such an enterprise but instead to describe what the church is and how the church is created and preserved. A careful examination of Article VII demonstrates that church fellowship is not under consideration but the church as the *Una Sancta.*[6]

Siegbert Becker states the same view when he says, "The 'true unity' of the church, spoken of in Augustana VII, is not the unity for which the ecumenical movement is striving, nor is it the kind of unity which is reflected in modern ecumenical activities."[7]

"The 'true unity' of the church . . . is not the unity for which the ecumenical movement is striving, nor is it the kind of unity which is reflected in modern ecumenical activities."

Hermann Sasse describes what the unity in the *Una Sancta* entails. "The Church of Christ is essentially one, *Una Sancta.* The doctrine of the Church is, therefore, always also a doctrine of the unity, the oneness of the Church. Also, the unity of the Church is at the same time a gift and a task, an indicative and an imperative."[8] Sasse clarifies his position in this way: "Not any consensus will do, but the consensus in the pure Gospel and the right administration of the sacraments."[9] Some would criticize such a view of AC VII as being overly concerned about doctrinal formulations. Sasse, however, shows that this is not the case. "Thus the article of the standing and the falling church keeps together all articles of the Christian faith and illuminates them. For Lutherans the concensus [*sic*] required should always be regarded as the doctrinal content of the Book of Concord."[10]

One of the questions in this view of the church as *Una Sancta* and her unity as *unitas* is in regard to the visibility of the church. If the church is not outwardly unified, then of what does her unity consist? Terms such as "invisible," "hidden," "inner unity," and "unity of faith" have been used to describe the church and her unity. Kurt Marquart explains: "Article VII itself plainly speaks not simply of something hidden and unobservable, but of outward, publicly verifiable entities, *viz.,* correct preaching and teaching of the Gospel and the proper administration of the holy sacraments."[11] Leif Grane approaches the question in this manner:

> Melanchthon's explanations are thus clear enough. He says that the AC speaks of *spiritual* unity. Therefore he refuses to involve himself with the objections of the Confutation which concern an external, demonstrable unity. All that is needful for this spiritual unity to exist is proclamation and the sacraments. Everything else is understood as human traditions, which may vary without threatening the church.[12]

Thus the questions focus on these issues: What is the church? What is her unity? How can we know?

The Gospel and the Sacraments

AC VII states that the unity of the church is somehow derived from the gospel and the sacraments. This is also an area of differing interpretations. What is included in the term "gospel"? How is the term qualified in AC VII? What is meant by "sacraments"?

David Truemper illustrates a minimalizing tendency, though he refuses to recognize it as such. According to Truemper, what is needed "for maintaining and regaining and preserving the unity of the church is the actual preaching of the gospel and the actual administration and reception of the sacraments—and not a doctrine or doctrines about the gospel and about the sacraments."[13] Thus, for Truemper, the acts of preaching and administering are the key factors with an intent to dispense with doctrinal understanding as well as doctrinal formulations.

Edmund Schlink intimates a similar view when he says,

> The Gospel in its essence is the oral proclamation of forgiveness. In the German and Latin texts 'preaching' and 'teaching' (that is, doctrina evangelii, A.C. VII, 2) correspond. Not the silent possession of doctrine is meant here but the act of oral teaching and, again, not a teaching that ignores assurance and comfort but a teaching that is preaching.

Schlink then addresses the sacraments in the same vein. "Likewise the stress is not placed on knowing about the sacraments but on their actual administration."[14]

While the events of preaching and administering are indeed essential in the gospel and the sacraments, others also focus on *how* these events are carried out. Holsten Fagerberg connects the ideas of content and action.

> The "Gospel" certainly does frequently denote the oral presentation of the forgiveness of sins, and faith certainly is an act of the will, but the Gospel, the promise that gives birth to faith, must in some sense be true in order to be able to awaken and sustain faith. The doctrinal element is to be found as soon as justification by faith is proclaimed. The Gospel is at one and the same time a proclamation and a doctrine. . . . Unity therefore involves not only the fact *that* the Word is proclaimed and the sacraments are administered, but also *what* is proclaimed and administered.[15]

Paul Bretscher makes the same point as he ties meaning to the events.

> It is necessary that the Gospel be preached and that it be heard. But it is of even greater significance *how* the Gospel is preached and *how* the Sacraments are administered. "*Est autem ecclesia congregatio sanctorum, in qua evangelium* pure *docetur et* recte *administrantur sacramenta*" . . . An earlier draft of the Augsburg Confession did not include the terms *pure* and *recte.* Melanchthon inserted them, however, in the official version because the opponents had maintained that they, too, taught that the church comes into being where the Gospel is preached and where the Sacraments are administered.
>
> But the question is in place, "When is the Gospel *purely* taught and when are the Sacraments *rightly* administered?" There appears to be but one answer to this question. The Gospel is purely taught if the preacher discloses its full meaning. What this meaning is, the Augsburg Confession aims to state. The Sacraments are rightly administered if they are administered in accordance with the Gospel as the Augsburg Confession understands it. . . . Accordingly, the Gospel is then preached *pure* and the Sacraments administered *recte* if these acts are performed in accordance with the teachings confessed in the articles of the Augsburg Confession.[16]

Is it the act of preaching and the act of administering which is of paramount importance? What of the substance of the gospel and the manner of administration of the sacraments? How do these "marks" of the church clarify the above-mentioned issues of the church's unity and nature? We now turn to an analysis of AC VII itself, confident that an exegetical study of this article will reveal some answers to these important questions.

EXEGESIS OF AC VII

Context Before Augsburg

We must first understand the concepts included in AC VII in light of their precontext. Luther's *Confession* of 1528 provides the first necessary backdrop for AC VII. Under the general heading of the Holy Ghost, and immediately following a paragraph on baptism, Luther confesses, "In the next place, I believe that there is one Holy Christian Church on earth, which is the communion and total number or congregation of all Christians in the whole world, the one bride of Christ and His spiritual body, over which He is the only head." The church is "over all the earth." He further states, "Christianity is scattered abroad, in a physical way, under the pope, Turks, Persians, Tartars and elsewhere, but it is spiritually gathered together in one Gospel and one faith, under one Head, Jesus Christ." Luther also gives some antitheses: "The papacy is truly the real power and tyranny of Antichrist." For Luther the church can be identified. "In this Christendom, wherever it exists, there is forgiveness of sins, that is a kingdom of grace and of true indulgence, for in it is the Gospel, Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar by which the forgiveness of sins is offered, and received, and also Christ and His Spirit and God are there. And outside this Christendom there is no salvation nor forgiveness of sins, but everlasting death and damnation." The forgiveness of which Luther speaks takes place not just once, but always.[17]

According to this confession, the church is a spiritual as well as physical entity, the spiritual body of Christ that is physically located throughout the world and marked by forgiveness of sins and grace, which are made manifest by the gospel, baptism, and the sacrament of the altar. A sharp contrast is set up between the Holy Christian Church and the pope or Roman Church, which is known for hierarchy rather than grace.

Luther's *Small Catechism* (1529) also provides some insight. Luther uses the description of the "whole Christian church on earth" to demonstrate the catholicity as well as physicality of the church. But the nature of the church becomes more evident when he says: "In this Christian church he daily and abundantly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers." In addition, one must note the contrast between believers and all people (for instance, the phrase "all the dead"). The church may be on earth, identified by the message of forgiveness of sins, but it does not comprise all people on earth.

The Large Catechism fleshes out the ideas expressed in the Small Catechism. Luther stresses the "community of saints" *(communio sanctorum)* and *ecclesia* (II, 47). He prefers the descriptions "a Christian congregation or assembly" and, best of all, "a holy Christian people" (II, 48). Here the church, properly speaking, is "a community composed only of saints" (II, 49). The characteristic of forgiveness is reiterated when Luther says, "Therefore everything in the Christian church is so ordered that we may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and through signs appointed to comfort and revive our consciences as long as we live" (II, 55).[18] For Luther, the *sine qua non* of the church is the forgiveness of sins because "outside the Christian church (that is, where the Gospel is not) there is no forgiveness, and hence no holiness" (II, 56). The community of holy Christian people is the place where forgiveness is bestowed through the word and the sacraments. This is the essence of the Christian church.

Outside this Christendom there is no salvation nor forgiveness of sins, but everlasting death and damnation.

Of even greater contextual import to AC VII is Article XII of the *Schwabach Articles* (1529).

> That there is no doubt that there is and remains upon earth until the end of the world a holy Christian church, as Christ declares, Matt. 28:20: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This church is nothing else than believers in Christ, who hold, believe and teach the above-mentioned articles and parts, and for this suffer persecution and martyrdom in the world; for where the Gospel is preached and the

> Sacraments used aright, is the holy Christian church, and it is not bound by laws and outward pomp, to place and time, to persons and ceremonies.[19]

The citation of Matthew 28:20 shows Luther's understanding of the source or foundation of the Christian church, namely, Christ himself. Especially noteworthy is the phrase "who hold, believe and teach the above-mentioned articles and parts." Schwabach Articles I–XI treat such doctrinal subjects as God, original sin, justification, the ministry, and the sacraments. There is no minimalism, either stated or implied, in this definition of the church. All articles of faith are involved when discussing the church. Also worthy of mention is that Schwabach XII simply states what the church is. It is a descriptive, not prescriptive, statement.

From these sources it becomes evident that the Christian church is comprised of believers over all the earth and is identified by the message of forgiveness of sins, which, in turn, is demonstrated in word and sacraments. The church is at the same time spiritual and physical, though it is not located in a single, central hierarchy. The underlying conception of the church in these sources is that of the *Una Sancta,* the church of Christ, which has been, is, and will always be Christ's one body.

Context Within the Augsburg Confession

An overview of the structure and context of the Augsburg Confession reveals that AC VII serves as a focal point or lynch pin to the other articles. The following table is helpful in seeing the centrality of AC VII.

is appropriated, or grasped, through faith, that is, "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" (IV, 2). The work of forgiving, or justifying, is left in God's hands, through his Son Jesus Christ. Humans ("we") are the mere recipients of the gift of justification: "we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions" (IV, 1).

The office of the ministry, which is the gospel and the sacraments, is the topic of AC V. The faith that appropriates God's gift of salvation is also given by God: "To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry" (V, 1); "he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel" (V, 2). Article V then reiterates Article IV when it says that we have a gracious God not by our merits, but by the merits of Christ.

In AC VI, the faith that apprehends God's gracious forgiveness "should produce good fruits and good works and that we must do all such good works as God has commanded" (AC VI, 1). The fact that a person is justified is made manifest by good fruits. The point is clearly reinforced, however, that such good fruits, or good works, still do not merit anything before God. No one can put his trust in his good fruits. It is in this context that AC VII describes the church. God forgives and justifies for the sake of Christ; humans apprehend this through faith, which is also given by God and which produces good works. The church, then, is the next step in the overall progression: Where does all of this happen? In the assembly of all believers where the gospel (AC I-VI) is rightly preached and taught.

ARTICLE	GIVEN TITLE [20]	DESCRIPTION
I	Of God	confess the essence of the Triune God
II	Of Original Sin	man's inability to fear and trust God
III	Of the Son of God	person and work of Christ
IV	Of Justification	man made righteous before God
V	Of the Ministry	teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments to obtain faith
VI	Of New Obedience	faith brings forth good fruits
VII	Of the Church	nature and unity of the church
VIII	What the Church Is	congregation of saints mixed with hypocrites and evil people
IX	Of Baptism	sacrament of reception into God's grace
X	Of the Lord's Supper	real presence of Christ's body and blood
XI	Of Confession	to keep private confession
XII	Of Repentance	nature of repentance and absolution
XIII	Of the Use of the Sacraments	signs of God's will toward men; awaken and confirm faith
XIV	Of Ecclesiastical Order	regular call for carrying out the ministry
XV	Of Ecclesiastical Usages	profitable church rites; not necessary for salvation

Gospel Articles

AC VII follows what may be called "gospel articles" (AC I–VI), which serve as the basis for the church. AC I treats the church catholic's teaching on God; AC II explains original sin; AC III discusses Christ, the Son of God. On the basis of the first three articles, AC IV reveals how humankind is justified before God: "we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith" (AC IV, 1). That forgiveness

Sacramental Articles

Articles VIII–XV consist of the "sacramental articles," namely, the manifestation of the church, or its outward signs and practices. On the basis of the teaching, or doctrine, of the gospel—in all its parts—the church can then be recognized by its sacraments, or signs, and practices. The articles following AC VII further explain what is meant by the sacraments, or the manifestation of the Christian church.

In AC VIII we have a combination of "saints" and "true believers" *(Versammlung aller Gläubigen und Heiligen; congregatio sanctorum et vere credentium)*. The two designations seem to run interchangeably. Perhaps the inclusion of both designations is to highlight the contrast with "hypocrites and evil persons." AC VII presents the true nature of the church, what it is in the purest sense. AC VIII presents the church as it is evident in an imperfect and sinful world, a mixture of believers among hypocrites and sinners among saints.

AC IX presents us with the first of the sacraments, the "one baptism" cited in AC VII. Here baptism is "necessary" *(nötig sei)*, or, as the Latin further explains, "necessary for salvation" *(necessarius ad salutem)*. What makes baptism "necessary" for the church is that God's grace is offered through it. The gospel is God's grace; accordingly, baptism is administered to bring God's grace to people, even children.

Articles X through XII explain the other manifestations of the church. AC X gives the teaching of the Lord's Supper as Christ's body and blood; AC XI advocates the retention of private confession and absolution; and AC XII describes the role of repentance in the life of baptized believers when they sin. All of these activities are part and parcel of the Christian church.

AC XIII defines the sacraments and their use. They are primarily "signs and testimonies of God's will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith" (AC XIII, 1). Proper use entails believing the promises offered in the sacraments, which, in turn, have the "purpose of strengthening faith" (XIII, 2). After describing what the sacraments are, the Augsburg Confession explains how they are to be practiced, namely, as God's means of awakening and preserving the faith that apprehends the gospel of forgiveness for Christ's sake. This explanation may be considered the AC's contextual definition of "sacraments administered according to the gospel."

Following the brief AC XIV on the *rite vocatus,* AC XV presents us with what the confessors had in mind regarding "human traditions" and "rites and ceremonies instituted by men." In AC XV church rites *(ritibus ecclesiasticis)* are explained as those rites and traditions "which may be observed without sin and which contribute to peace and good order in the church" (AC XV, 1). Examples given by the confessors are "certain holy days, festivals, and the like" (XV, 1). Such observances are not to be considered "necessary to salvation" *(nötig zur Seligkeit; ad salutem necessarius)*. Human traditions *(Traditionen, von Menschen dazu gemacht; traditiones humanae)* instituted to placate God are contrary to the gospel. Examples are "monastic vows and other traditions concerning distinctions of foods, days, etc., by which it is intended to earn grace and make satisfaction for sin" (XV, 4). The rites and traditions which are not necessary for salvation are "not necessary" for the church, though they may be beneficial in providing good order. The key determination is whether or not a human tradition benefits or hinders the gospel, whether it lets the gospel shine forth or whether it obstructs God's gift of salvation by means of human ritual merits. It must be noted that the rites of which the confessors approve are indeed worship rites, whereas the rites that they here oppose are specifically matters of personal piety that had become part of the Roman system of righteousness by human works.

Textual Analysis

Analysis of the source texts[21]

A comparison of Melanchthon's revisions of the Augsburg Confession reveals some key developments. How is the church described in these documents? The first form of the AC, Nürnberg A (Na)[22] uses the phrase *Versammlung der Heiligen*, which shows up in the final Latin text as *congregatio sanctorum.* The revised form, Nürnberg B (Nb),[23] and the final form of the AC, however, both use the revised wording *Versammlung aller Gläubigen.* The final reference is to the assembly of believers, not simply holy ones, hence making the definition more concrete and personal. The term *Gläubigen* also more directly connects AC VII with the three previous articles of the Augustana. In AC IV justification comes by grace, on account of Christ, *durch den Glauben* (through faith), when we believe *(wir glauben)* that Christ suffered for us. In AC V the office of the ministry, which is the gospel and the sacraments, is the means of obtaining such faith *(solchen Glauben)*, which the Holy Spirit works. In AC VI such faith *(solcher Glaube)* brings about good fruits and good works. Hence the church is the assembly of *aller Gläubigen* on the basis of AC IV–VI as well as AC VII.

The rites are more than mere acts; they are the marks of the church and are to be practiced rightly and according to the gospel.

Also intriguing is the addition of modifiers to "the gospel" and "the sacraments." Na simply uses the phrase *das Evangelium gepredigt und die Sakramente gereicht werden*, whereas Nb and AC include the adverb *rein* with *Evangelium gepredigt* and the adverbial phrase *laut des Evangelii* in relation to administering the sacraments. The addition of modifiers seems to give more precision to what is meant by the preached gospel and the administered sacraments. They are more than mere acts; they are the marks of the church and are to be practiced rightly and according to the gospel.

The addition of modifiers explains the omission of *übereinkommt* in the revision from Na to Nb. Whereas *übereinkommt* in Na might give a hint of intended reconciliation with Rome, a matter left to human negotiation and dialogue, the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments are not matters of human agreement or consensus. Rather, as Scripture reveals, they are given by God himself for the good of the gospel (AC IV). Thus *rein* and *laut des Evangelii* go hand in hand, perhaps in a synonymous relationship, to make a stronger statement regarding the nature and given unity of the Christian church.

One other noted difference in the source texts of AC VII is their respective citations of Scripture. Na cites Jesus, Luke 17:20, whereas Nb and AC cite Paul, Ephesians 4:4, 5 (or, in the Latin, Eph 4:5, 6). By citing Luke 17:20, Na would seem to stress the

"invisibility" or hidden character of the church, which presumably was not desired for the final statement. Nb and AC use Ephesians 4 to stress the existing unity of the reformers with historic Christendom (catholicity). This is one more clue that AC VII speaks of a unity of the church that is a given or already-present reality rather than one which must be sought and fostered. Also regarding the Scriptural citations, there is variance between the citation in the German of AC VII (Eph 4:4, 5) and that in the Latin (Eph 4:5, 6). The common thread, however, seems to be the Pauline emphasis on "one," especially as an indicative description.

Structural Analysis of the German Text

Now we come to the text proper of AC VII. For this analysis, the text is simply organized in such a way as to visualize the flow of thought, highlight key connections, and show existing parallelisms and contrasts. The numbering of each statement corresponds to the reference numbers given in *The Book of Concord.* The German text may be arranged in the following manner.

In Statement 2 we move to a description of the true unity of the Christian church. The true unity (*wahrer Einigkeit*) of the church is where the gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered. Essential for this true unity, however, is how these actions are accomplished. The gospel is preached "harmoniously *(einträchtiglich)* according to a pure understanding [of it]." This description is tantamount to the description of *rein* in Statement 1. The purely understood gospel is none other than that given in Holy Scripture, unadulterated by human tradition or ritualism. When the gospel is preached purely, the "harmony" is a natural result. The sacraments are administered "according to the divine word." Tantamount to *laut des Evangelii* in Statement 1, the administration of the sacraments flows out of the gospel (AC IV), essentially finds its origin in Christ's own divine institution, and furthermore, is no mere human ritual or ordinance. The chiastic structure observed in the second half of Statement 2 would seem to highlight the close connection between gospel and sacraments at the very center of the church's given unity.

(1) Es wird auch gelehrt,
dass allezeit müsse **eine heilige christliche Kirche** sein und bleiben,
welche ist die Versammlung ***aller Gläubigen,***
bei welchen (1) das Evangelium rein gepredigt
und (2) die heiligen Sakramente laut des Evangelii gereicht werden.

(2) Denn dieses ist genug zu wahrer Einigkeit der christlichen Kirche,
dass da
[einträchtiglich nach reinem Verstand] → **das Evangelium** gepredigt
und **die Sakramente** ← [dem göttlichen Wort gemäss] gereicht werden.

(3) Und ist nicht not zu wahrer Einigkeit der christlichen Kirche,
dass allenthalben gleichförmige
Zeremonien, ← [von den Menschen eingesetzt], gehalten werden;

(4) wie Paulus spricht Eph. 4, 5.6: "Ein Leib, ein Geist, wie ihr berufen seid zu einerlei Hoffnung eures Berufs; ein Herr, ein Glaube, eine Taufe."

Statement 1 gives the definition of the Christian church. In addition to stating that this "holy Christian church must be and remain for all time," it is the church that is defined as "the assembly of all believers." The first relative pronoun, *welche,* refers to *Kirche.* Then there is a shift. The second relative pronoun, *welchen,* refers not to "the church," but to "all believers," *aller Gläubigen.* The preposition *bei* indicates that it is "in" or "among" the believers that the gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered. These marks of the church are not a matter of structural organization as much as they are a natural indication of where "all believers" are to be located. Statement 1 also shows the parallelism of the gospel (1) and the sacraments (2); they are to be kept together, hand in hand, when discussing the church. As mentioned above, there seems to be close parallelism between *rein* and *laut des Evangelii.* In the true church the gospel is preached rightly, and the sacraments are administered in the same way, namely, according to that same (rightly preached) gospel.

Statement 3 provides the antithesis for Statement 2. If true unity for the Christian church is based on the purely preached gospel and the sacraments administered according to that gospel, then humanly instituted ceremonies and their uniform observance do not constitute the church's oneness. In the third statement, *Zeremonien* is juxtaposed over against *die Sakramente* in Statement 2. The descriptive phrases heighten the antithesis. Whereas the sacraments are administered "according to the divine Word," the ceremonies in question are "established by human beings" (*von den Menschen*). The contrast, then, between Statements 2 and 3 is not so much one of minimum bases for church unity over against more than essential (extra-curricular?) bases. Rather, the antithesis is between the God-given nature and unity of the church on the one hand and humanly devised means of showing church uniformity on the other.

Statement 4, the citation from Ephesians 4, strengthens the argument. The clearly indicative statement by Paul reinforces the

idea that the confessors are describing the God-given character of the Christian church and emphasizing the already-present unity among all believers. Even the context of Ephesians 4 stresses the God-given oneness. In Ephesians 4:3 Paul talks of *maintaining* the unity of the Spirit.

Structural Analysis of the Latin Text

The Latin text of AC VII may be shorter due to the economy of words on the part of the language itself, to Melanchthon's pen, or to both, but the same conclusions may be drawn. Here is how the Latin text may be arranged.

(1) Item docent, quod **una sancta ecclesia** perpetuo mansura sit.
Est autem **ecclesia** ***congregatio*** sanctorum,
in qua *evangelium* [pure docetur]
et [recte administrantur] *sacramenta.*

(2) Et ad veram unitatem ecclesiae
satis est consentire de
doctrina evangelii
et *administratione* sacramentorum.

(3) **Nec necesse est** ubique esse similes
traditiones humanas,
seu *ritus aut ceremonias* ab hominibus institutas.

(4)Sicut inquit Paulus Eph. 4, 5.6: Una fides, unum baptisma, unus Deus et Pater omnium etc.

Statement 1 in the Latin indicates that the "one holy church" (the absent adjective "Christian" is perhaps understood) is "the assembly of holy ones," thus retaining the thought of the original wording of Na. In the Latin, the relative pronoun *qua* refers to the assembly *(congregatio)*. Thus it is in the assembly or congregation itself where the gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered. In contrast to the one-to-one parallelism of the German's description of gospel and sacraments, the Latin has a chiastic structure with the verbal phrases at the center. Again, the focal point is not merely the carrying out of the preaching and administering. The essential point is *how* these tasks are carried out. The gospel is preached "purely" *(pure)*[24] and the sacraments are administered "rightly" *(recte)*. These adverbs cannot be taken lightly. These respective counterparts to the German's *rein* and *laut des Evangelii* show that the preaching and administering are more than mere acts or events. There is a certain content or substance behind the actions. *Pure* and *recte* actually define the unity of the church. Instead of multivalent understandings of the gospel and variant practices of the sacraments, the gospel preached purely and the sacraments administered rightly initiate and demonstrate the unity among all believers of the church." Statement 2 in the Latin also stresses the "true unity" *(veram unitatem)* of the church (again, "Christian" is presumably understood). In the Latin version, however, there is the puzzling term *consentire*. At first glance, this term would seem to retain Na's concept of *übereinkommt*, namely, coming to a consensus or agreement. This connection cannot be ignored. In comparison with the final German text, however, *consentire* seems to pick up on *einträchtiglich*. As the analysis will reveal, any talk of "agreement" is not a matter of human definition or accomplishment. The unity of the church is based on the consent or harmony of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. Whereas the German text has verbs that explain the gospel and sacraments ("preaching" and "administering"), the Latin has nouns. The basis for the unity of the church is the *doctrina evangelii* and the *administratione sacramentorum*. The term *doctrina* does not refer to any mere act of preaching or teaching. The very term itself implies the substance of gospel preaching and teaching. The true unity of the church, then, is based not only on the fact that preaching and administering are being performed, but also on the content of the preaching and teaching and the manner of the administration, namely, that it is rooted in and flowing from gospel content.

Statement 3 again provides the antithesis, which more clearly explains Statement 2. Here the basis for true unity in the church is set over against that which is not needed as the basis. The phrase *ubique esse similes* is here juxtaposed with *consentire* in Statement 2. That certain traditions "be everywhere alike" is undoubtedly a weaker, less important consideration than the harmony of the gospel. *Traditiones* and *ritus aut ceremonias* are viewed as the opposites of *doctrina* and *administratione*. In case there is any tendency toward rampant iconoclasm, however (a.k.a. worship reform), AC VII explains the antithesis further. The unnecessary basis for true unity of the church is "human" *(humanas)* traditions and those rites and ceremonies "instituted by humans" *(ab hominibus institutas)*. The Statement 2 counterparts to these descriptions are the terms *evangelii* and *sacramentorum*. As in the German text, the antithesis is between God-given things, gospel and sacraments, and humanly instituted things, traditions, rites, and ceremonies which add to or get in the way of the gospel and sacraments. The contrast is between what God has given as the identification of the church and the abuses that have crept into the church and her piety over time.

Again, Statement 4 cites Paul's words from Ephesians 4. Though slightly different from the citation given in the German text, the prooftext again highlights the oneness, or unity, of the Christian church, this time in "one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." The common element in the respective Scripture quotations is Ephesians 4:5, particularly the words "one faith, one baptism." One wonders if this is Melanchthon's attempt further to focus the indicative statement of the church's true unity on what provides and shows that unity, namely, purely preached gospel ("one faith") and rightly administered sacraments ("one baptism").

Satis est vs. *nec necesse est*: An Argument from Semantics

One of the major dilemmas in understanding AC VII is the contrast between the Latin phrases *satis est* (German *genug*) and *nec necesse est* (German *nicht not*). What exactly is the import of this dichotomy? What is "enough" or "sufficient" for the church's true unity? What precisely is "not necessary"? Can anything be considered "necessary" for true unity? Does "enough" avoid some kind of legalism that might be implied in a term such as "necessary"? The following argument seeks to understand this dilemma in light of semantics. Though this author has not encountered such an

argument in print, it does seem to shed light on the problem, and perhaps it may even minimize misinterpretation.

When considering the import of the *satis est*, perhaps we need to determine the opposite of the term. Thus, we might ask, "What is *not* 'enough'?" or "What is *more than* 'enough'?" In AC VII the confessors are reducing the bases for true unity in the church. Hence they must consider certain bases or practices as "*more than* 'enough.'" Yet those bases are described as "not necessary." Thus we must also ascertain the opposite of the *nec necesse est*—"What is *not* 'not necessary'?" The answer would appear to be phrased something like this: What is *not* 'not necessary' is that which *is* 'necessary.' Clearly, the confessors viewed human traditions and rites and ceremonies instituted by human beings as "not necessary" for the church's true unity. It then follows that the confessors did view the gospel and sacraments as "necessary" for the definition and true unity of the church.

The issue of AC VII is not one of ecumenicity but rather of defining wherein the church's God-given unity lies. The sixteenth-century Roman Catholic claim was that the confessors were abolishing too many observances or marks of the church and thus disrupting the true unity of the church. The confessors, on the other hand, responded that they were not disrupting the church's true unity. Rather, they were omitting certain abuses and highlighting the actual, Scriptural bases for the church and her unity. Thus the confessors were making the claim that gospel and sacraments are sufficient or "enough" for the church's true unity. Rome's claim may be described as "More is necessary." In addition to gospel and sacraments, Rome wanted the confessors to recognize the papacy, monasticism, Corpus Christi festivals, distinctions of foods, and other things as necessary for the church's unity. The reformers, however, could not go that far. Thus we might diagram the distinction in the following way. Rome says, "Here is what is necessary for the unity of the church."

Gospel
Sacraments
Papacy
Monasticism
Corpus Christi Festivals
Distinctions of Foods, etc.

The confessors respond, "No, only this much is necessary; this is enough."

Gospel
Sacraments

The confessors also respond, "These things are not necessary for the church's true unity."

Papacy
Monasticism
Corpus Christi Festivals
Distinctions of Foods, etc.

Rome says, "More is necessary." The reformers say, "It is enough to have gospel and sacraments. Certain things *are* necessary, but only to a point. Hence, here is where we draw the line." The issue of AC VII, then, seems to be one of where to draw the line on what is necessary and what is not, between what is enough and what is more than enough for the church's true unity.

Context after Augsburg

Summary of the Response in the Confutatio Pontificia

The Roman response to the Augsburg Confession, the *Confutatio,* enables us to see how the confessors' opponents received this particular article on the church. The *Confutatio* responded with four points. First, AC VII cannot be admitted if, by this definition, the wicked and sinners are to be separated from the church. Second, the Council of Constance condemned the same article from John Huss. John the Baptist compared the church to a threshing floor with wheat to be gathered and chaff to be burned upon Christ's return (Mt 3:12). Third, the opponents state that they cannot accept AC VII even though it confesses that the church is perpetual (Jn 14:16). The final statement is that the confessors are to be praised if their discussion on rites refers to "special rites" (Jerome), but they are to be rejected if their discussion on rites refers to "universal Church rites" (1 Cor 11:16, St. Augustine).

The issue of AC VII is not one of ecumenicity but rather of defining wherein the church's God-given unity lies.

Summary of Apology VII/VIII

Since the Apology of the Augsburg Confession is Melanchthon's own explanation and defense of the Augustana as well as his response to the *Confutatio,* it serves as the best commentary for interpreting AC. This is especially true regarding AC VII. Melanchthon's treatment of the church in Ap VII/VIII responds to two of the statements in the *Confutation:* the first statement on the wicked and sinners in the church, and the fourth statement on the distinction between special and universal rites.

First, Melanchthon addresses the issue of wicked people within the "assembly of saints" (Ap VII/VIII, 1–29). Melanchthon chalks the response of his opponents up to slanderous misinterpretation. His counterargument is quite simple: AC VIII "exonerates us enough" (Ap VII/VIII, 3; Tappert, 169). One will recall that in Na, the first draft of AC, article VII included the section that later became an independent article, AC VIII.[25] Clearly, the two statements about the church were originally intended to complement each other. In the Apology Melanchthon explains the distinction between the church as purely believers and the church as an admixture of the holy and the wicked. "We concede that in this life hypocrites and evil men are mingled with the church and are members of the church according to the outward associations

of the church's marks—that is, Word, confession, and sacraments—especially if they have not been excommunicated" (Ap VII/VIII, 3). Melanchthon continues: "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 *[societas fidei]* and of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts. To make it recognizable, this association has outward marks, the pure teaching of the Gospel *[puram evangelii doctrinam]* and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the Gospel of Christ *[consentaneam evangelio Christi]* (VII/VIII, 5).

In addition, the church is "made up of men scattered throughout the world who agree on the Gospel *[qui de evangelio consentiunt]* and have the same Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same sacraments, whether they have the same human traditions or not" (Ap VII/VIII, 10). He also states, "Hypocrites and evil men are indeed associated with the true church as far as outward ceremonies are concerned" (VII/VIII, 12). In short, the opponents' rationale for not accepting AC VII on the basis that it did not mention the inclusion of hypocrites and wicked people in the church was really no good reason; all they had to do was read Article VIII.

Second, Melanchthon answers the issue of "particular rites" over against "universal rites" (Ap VII/VIII, 30–50). With simple candor Melanchthon indicates that the papists do not understand the issue. They are talking about "true spiritual unity" *[vera, hoc est, spirituali unitate]*, without which there can be neither faith in the heart nor righteousness in the heart before God. "For this unity, we say, a similarity of human rites *[rituum humanorum]*, whether universal or particular, is not necessary" (VII/VIII, 31). Neither particular nor universal rites impinge upon the church's true unity. The confessors did not play fast and loose with church rites, however. They retained those rites that were beneficial to the gospel and promoted tranquillity within the church: "so we believe that the true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by men, although we like it when universal rites are observed for the sake of tranquillity" (VII/VIII, 33). Further description of human traditions comes when Melanchthon writes:

> The righteousness of the heart is a spiritual thing that quickens men's hearts. It is evident that human traditions do not quicken the heart, are not works of the Holy Spirit (like love of neighbor, chastity, etc.), and are not means by which God moves the heart to believe (like the divinely instituted Word and sacraments). Rather, they are customs that do not pertain to the heart and "perish as they are used." Therefore we must not believe that they are necessary for righteousness before God (Ap VII/VIII, 36).

Melanchthon then proceeds to list some historical instances in which variance in human observances does not seem to harm the unity of faith *[unitatem fidei]* (VII/VIII, 42–45).

Of course, the church, as it is manifested on earth, is comprised of hypocrites among all believers; but in the purest sense, the church is still only made up of true believers who agree on the gospel and the sacraments. Humanly devised and instituted ceremonies do not define the church or her true unity, though they can hinder and obstruct the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Yet some of the human traditions can and must be recognized as helpful to good order and tranquillity.

Other Confessional Writings

A brief overview of the church as defined in other confessional writings is also helpful in understanding AC VII. In Ap XV, "Human Traditions in the Church," the issue is whether or not human traditions have anything to do with earning grace and justification. Melanchthon clearly states that human traditions do not merit God's favor and forgiveness. In application to AC VII, the unnecessary nature of human traditions and rites is in regard to justification, the gospel, and the nature of the church.

Some human traditions came from church fathers and can be retained for the proper reasons.

Melanchthon's treatment of human traditions in Ap XV shows that some such rites and ceremonies can and, for good reasons, should be maintained. Some human traditions came from church fathers and can be retained for the proper reasons. "The holy Fathers did not institute any traditions for the purpose of meriting the forgiveness of sins or righteousness. They instituted them for the sake of good order and tranquillity in the church" (Ap XV, 13). Another statement claiming the benefit of human rites, as the church fathers viewed them, is as follows.

> They observed these human rites because they were profitable for good order, because they gave the people a set time to assemble, because they provided an example of how all things could be done decently and in order in the churches, and finally because they helped instruct the common folk. For different seasons and various rites serve as reminders for the common folk. For these reasons the Fathers kept ceremonies, and for the same reasons we also believe in keeping traditions (Ap XV, 20–21).

In 1537 Luther penned the Smalcald Articles. Though not directly related to the Augustana or its Apology, this source further clarifies what the confessors taught even after Augsburg. SA III, XII, "The Church," defines the church in this manner: "thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd" (SA, III, XII, 2). We also have some further clarification of the reformers' concept of human traditions. "Its [the church's] holiness does not consist of surplices, tonsures, albs, or other ceremonies of theirs [the papists] which they have invented over and above the Holy Scriptures, but it consists of the Word of God and true faith" (SA, III, XII, 3). Again, the tra-

ditions listed are in opposition to Scripture. Hence, what the confessors rejected were those practices that conflicted with or overshadowed the gospel. Further testimony on this issue comes in SA III, XV, "Human Traditions," where Luther writes, "The assertion of the papists that human traditions effect forgiveness of sins or merit salvation is unchristian and to be condemned" (SA, III, XV, 1).

Formula of Concord, Article X, "Church Usages," is often cited to clarify AC VII. For the purposes of this study a brief sketch of the argument of FC X will further illustrate the issue of human traditions. FC recognizes that human ceremonies or church usages "are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God but have been introduced into the church in the interest of good order and the general welfare" (FC Ep X, 1). In the five Affirmative Theses, such ceremonies are, first, described as "in and for themselves no divine worship or even a part of it." Second, "the community of God in every locality and every age has authority to change such ceremonies according to circumstances, as it may be most profitable and edifying to the community of God." The third thesis, however, gives a note of caution against random and careless changes: "all frivolity and offenses are to be avoided, and particularly the weak in faith are to be spared." Thesis four addresses the stated question at issue when it says: "We believe, teach, and confess that in time of persecution, when a clear-cut confession of faith is demanded of us, we dare not yield to the enemies in such indifferent things." And the fifth thesis echoes AC VII's definition of the church when it states, "no church should condemn another because it has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God, as long as there is mutual agreement in doctrine and in all its articles as well as in the right use of the holy sacraments" (FC Ep X, 3–7). The Antitheses simply reject and condemn the opposite of the teachings outlined in the Affirmative Theses.

The larger context of the confessional symbols keeps the focus of AC VII in proper perspective. The Confessions hold that human ceremonies are, at the same time, beneficial for good order and discipline within the church but not necessary for the true unity of the church. The church's nature and true unity stem from gospel doctrine and the holy sacraments.

CONCLUSION

Although this study represents only a brief survey of some of the issues related to AC VII, it is clear that Article VII addresses the true nature of the church, its true unity, and how the church is manifested, namely, what is necessary for being "the church." More than an outward association of like-minded people or a hierarchical structure, the church is first and foremost the assembly of all believers in Christ—those who are gathered around God's message of the gospel—namely, the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and, thus, righteousness before God—and God's sacraments, which bestow his grace and, hence, enliven and preserve faith in the believers. Human ceremonies and rites are not to be considered necessary for the true unity of the church, though they do serve the noble purpose of maintaining good order among the believers.

What kind of unity does AC VII express and promote? The term *unitas,* as opposed to *concordia,* would be the appropriate answer. AC VII does not, in the context of the Augustana or other confessional writings, serve as a call for unity or a summons to achieve and foster outward, ecumenical church uniformity; that is the concept of *concordia.* Instead, AC VII gives a definition of the nature of the church and wherein her unity lies. Both the church's nature and unity are understood as given by Christ himself. Thus the church, properly speaking, is not a matter of human agreements, dialogues, rites, or ceremonies. God gives the church and her true unity; we simply confess and recognize what is already there. LOGIA

NOTES

1. Harding Meyer and Heinz Schütte, "The Concept of the Church in the Augsburg Confession," trans. James L. Schaaf, in *Confessing One Faith: A Joint Commentary on the Augsburg Confession by Lutheran and Catholic Theologians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982),175.
2. David G. Truemper, "The Catholicity of the Augsburg Confession: CA VII and FC X on the Grounds for the Unity of the Church," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 11, vol. 3 (1980): 22.
3. Robert C. Schultz, "An Analysis of the Augsburg Confession Article VII, 2 in it's [*sic*] Historical Context, May & June, 1530," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 11 (1980): 33.
4. See Schultz, 27–30.
5. Schultz, 35.
6. E. Lassmann, "Augsburg Confession VII: An Unnecessary Controversy," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 44 (January 1980): 59.
7. Siegbert W. Becker, "Augustana VII and the Eclipse of Ecumenism," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 44 (July 1980): 111–112).
8. Herman Sasse, "Theses on the Seventh Article of the Augsburg Confession," *The Springfielder* 25 (Autumn 1961): 14.
9. Ibid., 15.
10. Ibid., 16.
11. Kurt Marquart, "Augsburg Confession VII Revisited," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 45 (1981): 17.
12. Leif Grane, *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 96, his emphasis.
13. Truemper, 12.
14. Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions,* trans. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 198–199.
15. Holsten Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions (1529–1537),* trans. Gene J. Lund (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 270–271.
16. Paul M. Bretscher, "The Unity of the Church (Article VII of the Augsburg Confession)," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 26 (May 1955): 330–331, his emphasis.
17. Martin Luther, *Confession,* 1528, cited in M. Reu, *The Augsburg Confession: A Collection of Sources with An Historical Introduction* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1930, *28–*29.
18. Tappert provides a footnote that identifies the term "signs" with "the sacraments" (418, n. 3).
19. *Schwabach Articles,* cited in Reu, *Augsburg Confession,* *43.
20. Taken from the *Triglotta.*
21. See Appendix.
22. The oldest form of the Augsburg Confession, May 31, 1530.
23. The revised form of the Augsburg Confession, June 15, 1530.
24. *BSLK* indicates a textual variant to this term, one which the *Triglotta* uses in its Latin text. The variant reading replaces *pure* with *recte*, hence using the same term for both the preaching of the gospel and the administering of the sacraments. Perhaps such an alternative indicates how closely Melancthon and the confessors viewed the preaching and administering, namely, as one and the same message and basis for unity. A *recte . . . recte* description would also favor a synonymous relationship between German's *rein* and *laut des Evangelium.*
25. See Appendix.

APPENDIX

Melancthon's Revisions Leading up to AC VII
underlined words = same wording in all three
italicized words = same wording Nb to AC

Nürnberg A, Art. VII
May 31, 1530
(Reu, 175*–176*)

7. Zum Siebenten, dass eine heilige christliche Kirche ewiglich bleiben wird. Die Kirche ist aber eine Versammlung der Heiligen, darin das Evangelium gepredigt und die Sakramente gereicht werden, und zur Einigkeit der Kirchen ist genug, dass man des Evangeliums und der Sakrament halben übereinkommt; aber dass die Zeremonien und andere menschliche Ordnung allenthalben gleich seien, ist nicht von nöten, wie Christus sagt: Das Reich Gottes kommt nicht mit einem Aufsehen.—
[Remainder serves as basis for AC VIII]
Wiewohl nun die Kirche, eigentlich zu reden, ist eine Versammlung der Heiligen und wahrhaft Gläubigen, jedoch dieweil in diesem Leben viele Heuchler und Böse darunter sind, mögen wir uns wohl und ohne Gefahr brauchen der Sakrament, so durch die Bösen gereicht werden, wie Christus sagt: Auf dem Stuhl Mosis sitzen Schriftgelehrten und Pharisäer, und sind die Sakrament und das Wort kräftig von wegen der Einsetzung und Ordnung Christi, ob sie gleich durch die Bösen werden gehandelt. Hier werden verworfen die Donatisten und andere, die da lehrten, man sollte keines Bösen Dienst in der Kirchen gebrauchen, denn was er handelt, wäre unkräftig.

Nürnberg B, Art. VII
June 15, 1530
(Reu, 175*–176*)

7. *Es wird auch gelehrt, dass allezeit muss* eine heilige christliche Kirche *sein und* bleiben, *welch ist die* Versammlung *aller Gläubigen, bei welchen* das Evangelium *rein* gepredigt und die *heiligen* Sakramente *laut des Evangelii* gereicht werden. *Denn dieses ist* genug *zu wahrer* Einigkeit der *christlichen* Kirche, dass *da einträglich nach reinem Verstand* das Evangelium *gepredigt und* die Sakramente *dem göttlichen Wort gemäss gereicht werden, und ist nicht not zu wahrer* (Einigkeit der) *christlichen* (Kirche), *dass allenthalben gleichförmige* Zeremonien, *von den Menschen eingesetzt, gehalten werden, wie Paulus spricht Ephe. 4: Ein Leib, ein Geist, wie ihr berufen seid zu einerlei Hoffnung eures Berufs, ein Herr, ein Glaube, eine Taufe.*

AC VII, German
June 25, 1530
(Triglotta, 46)

Es wird auch gelehrt, dass allezeit müsse eine heilige christliche Kirche *sein und* bleiben, *welche ist die* Versammlung *aller Gläubigen, bei welchen* das Evangelium *rein* gepredigt und die *heiligen* Sakramente *laut des Evangelii* gereicht werden.
Denn dieses ist genug *zu wahrer* Einigkeit der *christlichen* Kirche, dass *da einträchtiglich nach reinem Verstand* das Evangelium *gepredigt und* die Sakramente *dem göttlichen Wort gemäss gereicht werden. Und ist nicht not zu wahrer* (Einigkeit der) *christlichen* (Kirche), *dass allenthalben gleichförmige* Zeremonien, *von den Menschen eingesetzt, gehalten werden; wie Paulus spricht Eph. 4,5.6: „Ein Leib, ein Geist, wie ihr berufen seid zu einerlei Hoffnung eures Berufs; ein Herr, ein Glaube, eine Taufe.*"

Commemorative Medal Celebrates Years of Luther

1996 marks the 450th anniversary of the death of the great Reformer Martin Luther.

Obverse

Reverse

In commemoration of a life committed to the Gospel and a death which by the power of that Gospel ushered Luther into eternal life, **Concordia Historical Institute** is producing an anniversary medallion.

The purpose behind the production of this **3-inch medallion** is to assist congregations, laypeople and pastors in celebrating their Lutheran heritage as they consider the abundant spiritual blessings God bestowed on His people through His servant Martin Luther and during the 450 years since his death.

The coin features Luther on his death bed, surrounded by friends and loved ones, with his hand on Holy Scripture. Beneath him appear the words "Be thou faithful unto death." (Rev. 2:10) The reverse side of the coin pictures Castle Church in Wittenberg, Luther's final resting place. It is designed by Rev. Scott Blazek, an LCMS pastor who has extensive experience in the design and production of such medallions.

Concordia Historical Institute is suggesting purchase of this medallion as a suitable gift for confirmands upon reaffirmation of their baptismal vow along with their promise to be faithful unto death. Those leading tours to Lutherland during the anniversary year may also wish to offer them to tour members as a memento of their trip.

The medallion is offered at a cost of **$30.00** for the bronze and **$100.00** for the silver* in order to cover production costs. Please add $4.00 for shipping and handling.

*Sorry, the silver is sold out.

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Colloquium Fratrum

"Through the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren . . ."

Smalcald Articles III/IV

RESPONSE TO "COMMUNION IN HOLY THINGS . . ."

To the Editors:

Your articles on the Missouri Synod's dealings with the EKiD were of special interest to me because they explain an experience I had in the fall of 1945. At that time I met Dr. Behnken and Lori Meyer in London and eagerly recited to JWB my observations as a chaplain of the doctrinal conditions in congregations in western parts of Germany. He seemed not the least bit interested. In fact he was annoyed, and I was puzzled by his indifference. Now I understand that they were playing with the hierarchy for high stakes. Unfortunately (?), they came up a cropper.

There are, however, some things about your fine publication that disturb me. There seems to be a pervasive tendency to widen the gap between clergy and laity. There is also an ill-concealed assumption that LCMS members are superior to other Christians. That's fine for esprit de corps, but damaging to faith. These often overlap in the same article. They do not glorify our Lord and Savior.

For example, the lead article in your Epiphany 1996 issue ("Communion in Holy Things in the Old Testament") presents pastors as heirs to a priesthood in a sense different from 1 Peter 2:9. The locus that should put the kibosh on that idea is Matthew 23:8: "You have only one Master and you are all brothers." Jesus is not addressing just the inner circle but the "crowds and his disciples" (v 1). In context, professional church workers were using petty tactics to set themselves above the herd.

One of several mistakes in the article stems from assuming (note 18) that God actually implemented his announced intention in Exodus 19:6. He did not. Verse 5 indicated that his promise to Israel was conditional. They forfeited this offer of direct contact with him in 20:18–24. In place of his announced intention, God invoked his "plan B." In the first instance this used Moses as intermediary and then established the priesthood with elaborate ceremonials to insure Old Testament "holiness." (Note that Israel already had an unauthorized priesthood (vv 22 and 24.) This arrangement as an alternative comes out a little more clearly in Deuteronomy 5:3–5 and 23–30. The author quotes Deuteronomy 28:9 but fails to note that under "plan B" Israel had been reduced to "his holy people," and even that was conditional. So forget Israel as a nation of priests. Rather, let us praise God for the glory of a direct relationship that eliminated any sin-tainted mediation, à la 1 Peter 2:9!

Continuing with note 18 (don't eat the daisies): The Apology references don't fit very well. XXIV, 34 comes close, but says nothing about ministers being the gatekeepers of purity, the point the author is trying to make. The Apology does not cite Romans 15:16 to indicate that pastors have a special office, but the author strains to do that. St. Paul does not claim that he enjoys a superior status, regardless of his use of λειτουργία and the like. He is using figurative language to explain his activity as a traveling missionary. The Roman Christians were getting along quite well without a resident pastor (v 14), so what right would he have to move in, even briefly? His apostleship justified the letter, but not his intrusion, so the rest of this chapter is a justification for his proposed visit. Another point: With reference to Ap XXIV, it cites Rom 15:16 to describe "those who teach in the New Testament." That includes the laymen in Romans 15:14 and in Romans 12:4–8.

On page 9 the author properly uses 1 Corinthians 14:33–36 to restrict women from the ministry, but it is a spurious analogy and unfair application to use the phrase here "holy things are for holy people." It is true that "the Lord's holy institutions are for salvation and blessing when rightly used," and he rightly cites Matthew 5:23–24, but he drops the ball when he makes no mention of repentance. That oversight casts a shadow on subsequent applications. After that the writer says many fine things, but a reader could get the impression that true holiness consists in belonging to the LCMS and avoiding every form of altar and pulpit fellowship that has not been approved by the CTCR.

Permit the observation that there is no indication in Romans, Corinthians, and other books that they had pastors in the LCMS sense. Some had teams of elders like Ephesus, which tried to keep congregations pointed to Jesus without benefit of a written New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 12:7–27 and 14:2–32 it is evident that the laymen were conducting all congregational affairs including divine worship—but that is a different subject. Let us not assume that our system was standard in the New Testament and that our gatekeepers for holy things are the ideal.

We carry in our minds a synod of pure doctrine and right practice that does not exist in real life. We close our eyes to our defects and highlight the shortcomings of other polities. This makes us feel good although we lack a reliable mechanism for

enforcing doctrinal discipline. Nobody dares inquire what district presidents really believe or how they square their convictions with political necessity. It is fine to operate in Christ's earthly kingdom with childlike trust, but when do we cross the line of naïveté and become foolish? It's fine to write of God's holy people and holy practices, but when do we ascribe that holiness to anything but grace? How can we discuss such sacred truths without the fervent prayer that God will have mercy on us and lead us to the righteousness that is only in Christ?

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AUTHOR'S RESPONSE

Thanks to Pastor Grunow for his response to my article. He even read the notes and looked up references!

Pastor Grunow mentions several mistakes, including a misinterpretation of Exodus 19:6. I respectfully disagree that this is an error. It is a different exegesis. The textual arguments given for the notion that Israel forfeited Yahweh's offer of priesthood, causing him to institute his "plan B" of a mediatory Aaronic priesthood, are ingenious but unfounded. These are arguments from silence; nowhere does the Bible state that this is so. In Exodus 19:5, 6 Yahweh says, "If you will really hearken to my voice (שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמְעוּ בְּקֹלִי) and keep my covenant . . . you will be to me . . . a kingdom of priests." *Hearkening* here does not mean hearing his audible voice, as in Deuteronomy 5 (where a different construction is used, שמע את־קול instead of שמע בקול), but obedient listening to Yahweh's words, whether spoken directly by him or through his messenger. In Deuteronomy 28:1, long after Israel has refused the audible voice of Yahweh, Moses uses the same language: "And it will happen, if you really hearken to the voice of Yahweh your God (שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל יהוה אֱלֹהֶיךָ) . . . ." True, Deuteronomy 28 says nothing about Israel's being a kingdom of priests, but in the Old Testament one should not overrate such silence. In fact, if we let 1 Peter tell us what the royal priesthood is, it becomes clear that Israel was indeed such a kingdom of priests. This priesthood exists "to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus" (2:5) and to "declare the praises of him who brought you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (2:9). A cursory reading of the Psalms will show that old Israel had these same glorious privileges (see Pss 51:15–17, 105:1–2, 116:12–19).

It may come as a shock to Pastor Grunow and others that it was not the Aaronic priesthood that Yahweh established in response to the people's desire not to hear his audible voice—a desire for which, incidentally, they were commended, not condemned (Dt 5:28–29)—but the continuing office of *prophet*!

> Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren. To him you shall listen, according to all that you asked of Yahweh your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, "Let me not hear again the voice of Yahweh my God, or see this great fire any more, lest I die." And Yahweh said to me, "They have done well in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them from the midst of their brethren a prophet like you, and I will put my words in his mouth" (Dt 18:15–18).

Yet who is willing on that score to say that there is no continuity between the Old Testament prophetic office and the New Testament office of the ministry—or that Christ, *the* Prophet of this passage, is only "plan B"?

The issue finally is not exegesis, but how God deals with his people. Pastor Grunow wants "direct access" for New Testament people instead of "sin-tainted human mediation." Hence a view of the ministry as a kind of optional appendage, as evidenced by some of his remarks. The Lutheran Confessions give another view. Ap VII & VIII, 28, XXIV, 18, and other passages teach that ministers are in the stead and place of Christ; through them the Lord himself gives out his gifts of grace (AC V; FC Ep XII, 22–24). Of course, the office of the holy ministry is not a continuation of the Aaronic priesthood, yet it is a continuation of the way God has always dealt with his people: through means given out through called servants. This "incarnational" salvation, found piecemeal in the Old Testament priests, prophets, judges, and kings, all comes together gloriously in the incarnate Son of God. Out of his fullness he still delivers his salvation through means distributed through men. To be sure, these men are not in themselves mediators, but stand as representatives of the one Mediator, and through them he still mediates his grace. To this extent there is a certain continuity in Christ between priest and pastor, as there is also between prophet and pastor. The Old Testament offices, filled by men of flesh and blood, typified the Word who would become flesh. The New Testament office likewise shows forth the Word who has become flesh.

An exegesis such as Pastor Grunow offers contains two inherent difficulties. First, it tends to confuse the *sacramental* aspects of the Aaronic priesthood and the *sacramental* character of the New Testament ministry with the *sacrificial* nature of the royal priesthood. When the royal priesthood, whose proprium is offering eucharistic sacrifices from men to God, is not clearly distinguished from the holy ministry, whose proprium is giving out gifts from God to men, law and gospel are mingled. A second difficulty is that, if taken to its logical conclusion, this exegesis would have to deny the means of grace altogether, for by this reasoning the New Testament God should deal with us by his "plan A," that is, immediately. Preaching, sacraments, Scripture, even the incarnation of our Lord would be superfluous.

As for the Apology references in note 18 of my article, these fit just fine if they are not pressed into service beyond that for which they were summoned. Their point is simply that the confessors saw connections between the Old Testament priesthood and the New Testament ministry of word and sacrament. Pastor Grunow is right about one mistake, however: the reference to Apology XXII, 7 should read XXII, 17. This says, "Nor dare we assume that the church immediately approves or accepts whatever the pontiffs decide, especially when Scripture prophesies about *bishops and pastors* in the words of Ezekiel (7:26), 'The law perishes from the *priest*.'" It is evident from this that the confessors did not suf-

fer from the phobia of continuity of offices that plagues modern Lutherans—although, as I pointed out in the same note, they also saw the discontinuities.

Pastor Grunow is right that my Apology references in note 18 say nothing about pastors being the "gatekeepers of purity"—they were not intended to—but the New Testament does. Our Lord parabolically dubs his called servant the θυρωρὸς, "doorkeeper" (Mk 13:34), who keeps out thieves and robbers and opens only to the Shepherd (Jn 10:3). Ministers are stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor 4:1) who must take heed to themselves and guard the flock (Acts 20:28–31). What does it mean to "guard the good deposit" (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14) if not to be a keeper of the pure doctrine of God's holy word—the only truly holy thing we have (LC I, 91)?

In discussing Ap XXIV, 34 and its use of Romans 15:16, Pastor Grunow says that "those who teach in the New Testament" include laymen. Not so, if he means publicly. The German text of AC XIV says, "Nobody should publicly *teach* or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call." In answer to the opponents' claim that "the sons of Levi" (Mal 3:3), that is, the clergy, offer propitatory sacrifices for sin *ex opere operato,* Ap XXIV, 34 does not deny that Malachi's prophecy is about ministers, as Pastor Grunow would seem to have it. It rather affirms that the "offering of righteousness" they offer is the (eucharistic) sacrifice of the gospel and its fruits. In this way, through preaching, Paul offered acceptable "sacrifices" to the Lord consisting of Gentile converts. Teaching the gospel is first and foremost the sacramental means by which the Holy Spirit works justifying faith (AC V), but secondarily it is the chief worship of God (Ap XV, 42). It is this secondary, sacrificial aspect that Paul speaks of in Romans 15. Quite true, this is no Levitical sacrifice. Yet Paul and the Lutheran confessors do not shy away from the Levitical priest-minister connection. Neither should we.

As to Pastor Grunow's claim that I have misused 1 Corinthians 14:33–36: This passage was cited with some others only to substantiate that "there are still clear albeit different boundaries governing who may and may not hold this office and perform its duties," not to imply that women are unholy. I stated earlier that in Christ there are no longer grades of holiness. Yet 1 Corinthians 14:33–36 does support the last statement in the paragraph, that no one may have a share in the Lord's holy things (here the holy ministry) apart from his bidding to do so.

Were New Testament churches lay-led, and was the ministry then different from ours, as Pastor Grunow alleges? No! The divinely instituted office of teaching the word and administering the sacraments is and has always been necessary in the church of every place and time (AC V, XIV). What it is and does has never changed. Pastor Grunow has rightly observed that Matthew 23:8 militates against class distinctions between clergy and laity. Could it be that the silence regarding pastors in 1 Corinthians 12–14, Romans 12, and other places reflects this absence of hierarchy rather than an absence of called and ordained ministers? Could it be that ministers are present, exercising their χαρίσματα of apostle, prophet, and teacher, only viewed in these passages from the standpoint of *gift* (in which all Christians share equally though differently) rather than of *office* (in which only those called to it share)? To exalt the holy office aright is not to make pastors lords over the people, but to give the people the gospel certainty that Jesus still speaks and acts on earth through his servants.

The article says not a word about the LCMS or the CTCR. It is rather about the teaching of the Old Testament on holy things and, in broad strokes, how this teaching can apply to the church today, however idealistic this may seem. To that end I concur with Pastor Grunow that we need to pray, "Lord, have mercy!"

In the first part of the article I endeavored to show how Israel's holiness was not her own doing but stemmed from God's grace. This grace is no abstraction. It came and comes still through earthly, "incarnate" means, summed up and bestowed in the incarnate Son of God. Holiness for us is not "up there"; it is here on earth in the holy Christian church, where the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, keeps, and forgives through earthly instruments. There is always the danger that the holiness of these means may be violated. That is why Yahweh told Israel to "keep"— guard—his holy words and institutions. That is why we are to do the same. We certainly do not attain holiness by right practices of altar and pulpit fellowship. Yet if we sully our Lord's holy things by wrong practices, we stand to forfeit this holiness bestowed on us by grace. This is not about "esprit de corps" or being better than others. It is about cherishing the holy things through which alone we are made holy.

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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

Testing the Boundaries: Windows to Lutheran Identity. By Charles P. Arand. St. Louis: CPH, 1995. 268 pages.

The question facing the age of Hermann Sasse was "*Was heißt Lutherisch?*" Sasse answered that true Lutheranism was to be found in the Lutheran Confessions as the correct understanding of Scripture. Today the question has been recast: "What does it mean to be a confessional Lutheran?" On a day in October 1995, as this reviewer served as moderator of the Reformation Lectures at Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary, assertions that true confessional Lutheranism was to be found, if somewhat vaguely, in the churches of the old Synodical Conference, and that "confessional Lutheran" and ELCA are oxymorons met with some discomfort from an ELCA friend sitting in the front row. There is a certain arrogance in the kind of talk that proudly claim the confessional Lutheran title for one's own party. And yet there are clearly bipolar camps within American Lutheranism. Of course, one would wish that the answer to the question could be, "Is there any other kind of Lutheranism than 'confessional'?"

One of the more elusive questions in American Lutheran history writing has been the quest for the differentiating factors between so-called Eastern and Midwestern Lutheranism. As convenient as that classification is for a college or seminary syllabus, it is finally unhelpful and avoids the historical and theological complexities. That the Lutheranism which has its roots in H. M. Muhlenberg and that which, if not rooted in C. F. W. Walther, still takes its measure from him, have gone in different directions, worked with different guiding principles, and had different motivations is palpable. But explanations for those differences have not been so easy to come by. All in one way or another were touched by pietism, but yet responded to it and grew out of it or drew away from it in different ways. Sociological and anthropological explanations for the differences have been mostly unconvincing and unhelpful.

Charles Arand's book is a new attempt to survey and analyze the differences. Arand focuses his attention on a number of teachers and writers in confessional studies and dogmatics, from S. S. Schmucker to Carl Braaten and Richard Jenson. At the end of the book, Arand very briefly makes the suggestion that he has worked out with his St. Louis colleague James Voelz (See *Concordia Journal* 21 [October 1995]: 366–384) that the Lutheran confessional writings be viewed as hermeneutical guides to Scripture, thereby taking the best of the two polarized views of the Confessions that have been adopted on American soil, and avoiding the pitfalls of each.

The teachers and writers surveyed include S. S. Schmucker, Charles Porterfield Krauth, Henry Eyster Jacobs and Charles Jacobs, Wilhelm Löhe, C. F. W. Walther, George Fritschl, George Grossman, J. L. Neve, J. M. Reu, J. W. Richard, Franz Pieper, J. T. Mueller, Theodore Engelder, A. C. Piepkorn, Theodore Tappert, Herbert Boumann, Carl Braaten, and Robert Jenson.

Arand is able to differentiate eight views of the Confessions, and in most cases the differentiation seems valid enough. In the end, however, there are essentially two different views: (1) those who viewed the confessions as purely or primarily historical documents, and (2) those who focused on the confessions as doctrinal norms. To the latter category belong Walther and Krauth, along with the Missourians of the first half of the twentieth century. In the former are, with the poorest results, S. S. Schmucker, and with the best results, those of the Löhe tradition. Of course, all of the subcategories become a little fuzzy at the edges, and in the most explicit proponents of each view, one worries about oversimplification. And so the Walther camp, which views the confessions as doctrinal statements, may tend to overlook the historical influences and circumstances. In fact, while Arand does not assert it explicitly, it turns out that the bulk of scholarship in confessional studies on American soil—and a tremendous contribution at that—came from those who viewed the Confessions primarily historically. Arand does suggest that the danger in the historical viewpoints is that the Confessions ultimately are to a greater or lesser degree so historically tempered that they are relativized. On the other hand, those who have viewed the Confessions more as doctrinal statements, though they gave us the *Triglotta* and Bente's historical introduction, have not until recent years been so interested in the historical and textual background of the confessional documents. Along the way, Arand also observes that especially in the twentieth century, one's view of Scripture also governs one's view of the confessional writings.

This reviewer is not ready to call this book a seminal work, but it certainly ought to provoke a thorough discussion of some crucial issues. Attempts to come to grips with the polarized state of American Lutheranism from various other perspectives have not been productive. This attempt shows a great deal of promise. Arand leaves himself open in his sometimes rather broadly brushed analysis of the various writers. This review cannot penetrate the depths of Löhe's influence and Löhe's views of the Confessions. It does appear, however, that Arand's analysis follows a

pretty typical Missourian direction, and we suspect that many of those who have found more in Löhe than Walther did will be somewhat dismayed by Arand's analysis. Just as Walther's views especially on the doctrines of church and ministry have often been distorted by his disciples, the critique of Löhe by Walther and his contemporaries has been handed down with insufficient scrutiny of the primary sources, so that in the interminable church-and-ministry debate within American Lutheranism, little progress has been made.

As helpful as Arand's study is, it is marred by insufficient attention to one issue in American church history that is especially illuminating of the issue of confessional subscription. Arand restricted his view of those who viewed the Confessions as doctrinal statements to the Walther circle and to Missouri. There was, however, a much wider view in the Synodical Conference, in which the Norwegian Synod played a large part. Although the Synodical Conference was not formed until 1872, Walther, as well as the Fort Wayne people, and the "high church" Norwegians had found each other quite a few years before, even before 1858; and it seems to be precisely on the matter of confessional subscription that they recognized each other. Theodore Tappert asserted in his study of confessional theology in America that "the majority of the Norwegians were theologically dependent on the Missouri Synod.[1] Carl Meyer and others have demonstrated the inaccuracy of that view.[2] The Norwegian Synod fell in with Missouri precisely because they had come to the same conclusions regarding confessional subscription.

Arand recognizes that the election controversy was important in understanding Walther's views on confessional subscription, and also points out that the impact of the election controversy cannot be underestimated. The election or predestinarian controversy is, however, treated more as a parochial issue. William Schmelder's statement cited by Arand is certainly correct: "The basic question in the controversy perhaps was not predestination, but the way one approached the Lutheran Symbols and interpretation of the Bible" (116). In what follows, however, it is implied that the problem lay chiefly with the Norwegians who had mistakenly followed the teaching found in Bishop Pontoppidan's Catechism, *Truth unto Godliness.* That, however, misses the point and avoids the most important lesson to be learned from this history.

In 1878 Walther read his famous paper on the doctrine of election to the Western District of the Missouri Synod. In the ensuing controversy, one of the chief players was pastor F. A. Schmidt, originally a Missouri Synod pastor from Baltimore. Schmidt had been called to the Norwegian Synod's fledgling prep school and college at Decorah, Iowa, at Walther's suggestion after Walther's good friends in the Norwegian Synod (Lauritz Larsen, U. V. Koren, J. A. Ottesen, H. A. Preus, and others) had asked for a good theologian who could speak English and would also be able to learn Norwegian. Schmidt was the candidate. Later, before the Norwegian Synod founded its own seminary at Madison, Wisconsin, to which Schmidt was called, Schmidt served briefly at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, not as a Missourian, but as the Norwegian Synod's representative. When Walther's paper was first read, Schmidt did not object to it, but after some months he did object, and accused Walther of Calvinism in the view he had put forward regarding the doctrine of election. A nasty struggle ensued. It was on this issue that the divide actually came between Missouri and the Ohio Synod (Ohio belonged to the Synodical Conference from 1872, and at one point Walther had proposed M. Loy for Concordia Seminary. In what may have been prescient, Loy declined, probably knowing the divide that was to come, though Walther seemingly did not.) The Norwegian Synod was sharply divided about 60-40, with the leadership and the majority agreeing with Walther, the others following Schmidt and company.

Arand cites the fact that the popular Norwegian catechism of Erik Pontoppidon had tended toward the Melanchthonian version of election. What is omitted is that most of the seventeenth-century dogmaticians did as well. While it is probably not provable, it seems evident that up to a point, Walther as well as his intimate friends in the Norwegian Synod had simply accepted the view of the seventeenth-century dogmaticians on the issue; that was what they had studied, and they had been given no reason to question it. But when they were forced to study the issue they found that they had to depart from their dogmaticians and return to the Formula of Concord.

That issue, it seems to this reviewer, demonstrates more than a little clearly the kind of confessional subscription adopted by one segment of American Lutheranism. And, we would add, it is precisely the self-understanding of the Book of Concord and its authors. While the issue between Walther and Schmidt may have had some personal and political roots, it became a disagreement of great substance—even beyond hermeneutics. In itself, the issue was whether one looks at grace and conversion anthropocentrically or theocentrically, from above or below. It penetrated the perpetual battleground of the *opinio legis,* the natural inclination to synergism that always wants to tame the gracious God into a creature of man's own making. It is a mistake, however, to think that one has done with the implications of the election controversy after having sorted out the biblical material on conversion and election. But that misses the point.

The election controversy was at bottom about how the church does theology. The roots of a great divide in American Lutheran theology were present well before Walther's election paper, whether in the conflicts between Muhlenberg and the rigid confessionalists of his day, the North Carolina Synod versus the Henkels, or the Schmucker-Krauth polarization. But the election controversy burned those differences into the fabric of American Lutheranism for the next seventy-five years, and they endure to the present, though they make less and less difference to anyone.

While it would be patent foolishness to suggest that Walther and the Norwegian Synod reached the apex of confessional orthodoxy in the election controversy (surely they did not!), they clearly showed what it meant to be confessional Lutherans and not merely conservative. One of our friends has observed that the difference between conservative Lutherans and confessional Lutherans is that conservatives act on the basis of their biases, while confessionalists act on the basis of Scripture. Conservatism tends to take its point of departure from a teacher, a founder, an institution, or an organization, and rigidly attempts to repristinate the teaching, idealize the founder, or preserve the organization. For our confessional Lutheran fathers in this country, their act of confession was finally to differ from their teachers and to go back to the Lutheran Confessions. When they

leaped over the seventeenth-century dogmaticians (whether that involved clear misstatements of Scripture or careless, unguarded expressions) and found the correct understanding of Scripture in the *Book of Concord.*

The American Lutheran Church continues to struggle with its understanding of Scripture and Confession today. Church and ministry are still issues, and so is the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. In both cases it remains an issue as to whether we will remain Lutheran or give in to Philippism. In both of these cases the decisive question is the same—whether to preserve the interpretation of the Confessions offered by our theological fathers and founders, from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, or the Lutheran confessional writings themselves are to be the norm.

Whether or not confessional Lutheranism today has the same force among those who want to call themselves confessional is another question. For much of American Lutheranism today (at both poles of it) the pious claim of one party to go back to the source (Scripture) simultaneously accompanied by the accusation that the other party goes too quickly to the Confessions very quickly gains adherents among the pious. One school of theology castigates another for spending too much time in the Lutheran Confessions. But thereby is revealed the essential pietism and biblicism that radiates from the core of the *opinio legis,* for therein the individual, subjective experience is isolated from the history of the church and her confession, both in the ecumenical creeds and in our Lutheran confessional writings. To hold to the Lutheran Confessions in the sense that Walther urged when he asserted that we do not ask our teachers to interpret the Confessions on the basis of Scripture but that they are required to interpret Scripture on the basis of the Confessions is, in fact, to place Scripture itself at the center. For then Scripture is no longer a private interpretation, changing with each new hermeneutical and linguistic insight.

There is a tendency to think of a basic core of Christianity to which each of the confessional (or non-confessional) entities adds its own uniqueness. And so one is supposed to be envious of the simple soul in the pew, living his everyday Christianity unencumbered by theology. That, however, is at odds with the way the Lutheran Confessions viewed their task, and the way the Lutheran confessional writings see themselves. The Lutheran confessional writings of the *Book of Concord* are the catholic, apostolic faith. Neither the confessors nor the Confessions ever claim that the documents are exhaustive, nor that they speak to every issue that might be raised by Scripture for different ages and places. But nevertheless, they see themselves not simply as one among other witnesses to the faith, but as the true witness to the faith, the correct and catholic understanding of the Holy Scriptures.

Arand's effort is helpful, and we hope that it will sharpen the discussion as to what it means to be Lutheran. It is, however, hard to replace Sasse's *Was Heißt Lutherisch?* There is a serious problem in focusing confessional subscription on the issue of hermeneutics. Hermeneutical principles have a way of evolving and meandering and changing with linguistic philosophy. So it does not seem to this reviewer that one can avoid relativizing the confessional writings under that approach. There is, for example, a certain helpfulness in speaking of law and gospel as the basic hermeneutical tool for Holy Scriptures. But in the hands of the empiricists and the destructive critics, the law-gospel hermeneutical principle became simply a reductionistic battering ram. So too the aim of the Lutheran Confessions is not to provide the Bible reader or the theologian with a better "key to the Scriptures." The confessional writings, the ecumenical creeds through the Formula of Concord, are defining and normative documents. It is certainly helpful and necessary to discuss the biblical hermeneutics employed in the Confessions. But to reduce the confessional writings to hermeneutical guides takes the edge off their doctrinal and normative character. The sharp edge of the Confessions is reflected in the Preface to the *Book of Concord:*

> Our disposition and intention has always been directed toward the goal that no other doctrine be treated and taught in our lands, territories, schools, and churches than that alone which is based on the Holy Scriptures of God and is embodied in the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, correctly understood, and that no doctrine be permitted entrance which is contrary to these (Tappert, p. 12).

It certainly is clear that one needs to know the historical context of the confessional writings. One needs to seek to understand the Confessions clearly by studying the contemporaneous writings of the authors: Melanchthon, Chemnitz and the other contributors to the Formula of Concord, but especially Luther (SD VII, 41). But the confessional writings mean more than that.

In his conclusion Arand suggests that

> it would seem that both views of the Confessions could be maintained in a dynamic tension if the Lutheran Confessions are considered in light of their hermeneutical role relative to Scripture. A treatment of the Confessions as a hermeneutic would draw attention to their continuing relevance as guides or maps for the further study of Scripture (266).

It is difficult to see that principle as being helpful. Walther demanded that one not relativize the Confessions by asserting that one interpret them according to Scripture:

> the symbols should be subscribed by ministers in the church in order to assure the church that they acknowledge as correct the interpretation and understanding of the Scriptures which is set forth in the symbols and consequently intend to expound the Scriptures as the church does that which they bind themselves to serve.[3]

We can be satisfied in fact with nothing less than this:

> The true church is gathered not around Scripture, but around the rightly understood, the purely and correctly interpreted Bible. It is the task of the church's confession to express the right understanding of Scripture which the church has reached.[4]

Both of these better capture the self-understanding of the *Book of Concord* concerning the nature of confessional subscription. *Testing the Boundaries* certainly offers a good start to restudying the nature of confessional subscription. And the general analysis of the sampling of American Lutheran theologians in itself makes this a necessary book for one's library. But a different route than the one offered, which views the Confessions primarily as hermeneutical guides, will have to be pursued. This route does not escape the confessional relativism that the bulk of American Lutheranism (including some who want to call themselves "confessional" or "conservative") have fallen into.

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NOTES

1. *Lutheran Confessional Theology in America, 1840–1880,* ed. Theodore G. Tappert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 37.
2. Carl S. Meyer, *Pioneers Find Friends* (Decorah, IA: Luther College Press, 1963).
3. C. F. W. Walther, "Why Should the Confessions of Our Church Be Subscribed Unconditionally Rather than Conditionally by Those Who Wish to Become Ministers of This Church?" in *Lutheran Confessional Theology in America,* 66.
4. Hermann Sasse, "Church and Confession" (1941), in *We Confess Jesus Christ,* trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 84.

Lutheranism and Pietism: Essays and Reports 1990, Lutheran Historical Conference. Vol. 14. Edited by Aug. R. Suelflow. St. Louis: Lutheran Historical Conference, 1992. 232 pages. Paper.

This is an excellent contribution to the literature on Pietism. For such an important topic there is surprisingly little literature available, in English at least. While the titles of these essays may appear to be very narrow, they actually give a very fine summary of the movement. They cover, for instance, old world background as well as American Lutheranism (this includes Scandinavian as well as German Lutheranism).

The volume contains the essays and reports of the fifteenth bienniel meeting of the Lutheran Historical Conference held at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on November 1–3, 1990. There are eight essays as well as responses and a panel discussion on the main theme. In addition, two forums are reported: one on "The State of American Lutheran History in American Lutheran Theological Education," and the other on "Archival Developments." The conference is, after all, an association of Lutheran archivists as well as historians and librarians.

If, as E. Clifford Nelson asserts, Pietism is the most prominent movement in the history of North American Lutheranism, we begin to appreciate the contribution of this volume.

Scandinavian Pietism can hardly be better represented than by Erik Pontoppidan's catechism. It was used widely especially among Danish and Norwegian Lutherans. James Olson's essay about its American influence illustrates this well (25). The essay "Henry Melchior Muhlenberg's Relation to the Ongoing Pietist Tradition," by Robert Scholz, helps clarify what may be to some the riddle of the man. Obviously influenced by Pietism, yet he was different from many of his contemporaries. Scholz is particularly helpful in reporting the various manifestations of Pietism and thus offers an explanation of the differences. Muhlenberg's was a Hanoverian, perhaps even a University of Göttingen Pietism, rather than the radical or Halle form of Spenerian Pietism. In Muhlenberg, similarly to C. F. W. Walther, one discovers a synthesis of Orthodoxy and Pietism (47).

The influence of Pietism in the work of Samuel Simon Schmucker is often mentioned. But James Haney's essay is about Schmucker's father, John George. This is important not only as a background to S. S., but as a study of the father's influence in itself. It is instructive for the background in the impact of revivalism and new measures on American Lutheranism. It illustrates well the important contrast between objective, confessional and sacramental Lutheranism and the more subjective, immediate spirituality in nineteenth-century Lutheranism.

Above all, the essays inform us of how alien Pietism was to the essential nature of confessional Lutheranism. The authors show how extensive was the impact of American Protestantism on the Lutheran community in the nineteenth century. The essays reveal not only the historical phenomenon but the theological issues as well. The reader is instructed, for example, in the areas of justification-sanctification, or of ecclesiology, or of epistemology. The essays illustrate the common problems in Pietism, as, for example, the overemphasis on experience and feelings at the expense of the content of the faith, the confessions, and doctrine. Finally, the essays include the other side, contrasts between S. S. Schmucker and Charles Porterfield Krauth.

This is an excellent contribution to our understanding of one of the most significant, that is, influential movements in the history of Lutheranism in North America. Especially so because Pietism remains an influential movement.

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The Other Story of Lutherans at Worship: Reclaiming Our Heritage of Diversity. By David S. Luecke. Tempe, AZ: Fellowship Ministries, 1995.

There are those who may surely be chagrined that I would write for *Logia* because of a perception of where I stand on an issue. Others will be equally chagrined that their perceptions of where I might be may be dashed based on my reactions to David Luecke's book *The Other Story of Lutherans At Worship.*

I have personally found in our Lutheran liturgical heritage in its form a defining of what being Lutheran means. In David Luecke's book it has been clarified even further for me, although probably not in a way Luecke would have intended.

He begins by defining what contemporary Lutheran worship is: (1) contemporary music, (2) visitor friendly, (3) informal, (4) revitalized preaching, and (5) featuring many different leaders. Well, okay, I thought, maybe I can work with this. Then I read further. Contemporary music, for him, means an almost total

rejection of hymnody and an almost exclusive use of praise choruses. Luecke defines contemporary worship as beginning with fifteen to twenty minutes of choruses in a medley that have emotionally expressive melodies, more syncopated rhythms, and absence of four-part harmonies (9). His revitalized preaching avoids theological language (7). The more I read, the more I found my own sensitivities threatened.

Luecke says the synthesizer is the dominant musical instrument in contemporary worship (23). The chorus focuses on expression of feeling and sentiment (27). Contemporary worship, in his mind, is super-sensitive to visitors. But "visitor-friendly" seems to suggest that we should at least consider compromising what we do as Lutherans, for instance, celebrate the Eucharist. He argues against frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper for reasons of simplicity and not giving offense to visitors.

I simply found myself at odds with Luecke's definition of worship. If this is contemporary worship then I am not at all comfortable with it.

In my own book, *Creating Contemporary Worship*, my intent was to show how to bring new material into the formula of the liturgy. I personally find a magnificent logic in the way Lutherans have traditionally worshiped and would never advocate abandoning our worship form. Some might counter that they are only traditions, man-made and adiaphora. Maybe so. But Lutherans have found those traditions to be helpful in providing a meaningful order to worship. I am not comfortable discarding something wholesale just because it is old or traditional. I would encourage evaluation and creativity but never total abandonment.

Luecke speaks highly of praise choruses. If I use a chorus it would most likely be as a sung response within a psalmody. I have a personal bias against using choruses as stand-alone pieces. To me they too easily become mantra-like. Also, I would never reject hymnody. Our hymns, old *and* new, are great teaching tools. As a pastor, I am afraid that people who are content with chorus-oriented music are denying themselves the opportunity to grow and mature in their faith. They are content with milk, choosing not to taste meat. Hymns can be magnificent teaching tools. Sometimes we may need to teach the hymns or we may need to encourage the singing. But it is worth the effort.

Interestingly, many promote choruses as a way to reach young people. But in my experience, there is increasing anecdotal evidence that young people prefer hymns. Luecke's arguments are boomer-oriented when it comes to music. Boomers are clamoring for something different. My generation started this whole thing in the '60s when we were in high school. I would caution that much of Luecke's musical concern could create a generation gap again (but we boomers were always good at gaps). Children and youth are not necessarily clamoring for a rejection of traditions. They are more likely to be critical of something done sloppily, including the Sunday worship service. They would expect whatever is done to be done with excellence.

St. Paul encourages us to use psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, which to me says: "don't limit yourself. Don't reject the old. Don't dismiss the new. God can use it all." Luecke also suggests that now people want longer sermons. I don't hear many teens expressing a desire for longer sermons. What they want is well prepared, tightly organized, practical, helpful applications of God's word. With young people that often happens with bullets of information, not with long expositions.

Finally, with regard to youth, what is really important to them is not their hymnals or liturgy. What matters is their perception of how much their pastor cares for them. According to the 1995 LYF Youth Poll, if teens feel cared for it doesn't make much difference whether they use *The Lutheran Hymnal, Lutheran Worship,* or a different order every Sunday.

Well, we could go on and on, page by page. I found much with which to struggle. I finally came to one conclusion. This book and people who fall into this school of thought are not really dealing with worship at all. I believe Luecke is offering an outline for event evangelism. To his credit, he speaks with passion for the lost, the unchurched, and the newly churched, novice believer. He wants folks to be comfortable in his church. He is talking about outreach. These days, door-to-door evangelism is not very effective. Something contemporary to which to invite people seems to work in many places. When I was in the parish, we used to do praise events on Sunday nights. These were opportunities to sing, to do new music, old hymns, traditional spirituals, all kinds of praise organized around a theme. But we really never considered these very popular events to be worship.

I question whether what Luecke writes about really is worship. Worship implies an established relationship between God and his people. If the focus of the event, or the concern, is for the unchurched, I have to ask whether it is really possible for them to worship. The book makes some sense if understood as an evangelism resource. His ideas may suggest ways to attract the attention of the unchurched, and they may be effective in some places. But this book seems content with small bites and never acknowledges the feast Lutheran worship can be. There's food for thought here, but not when it comes to worship. It got me thinking, but it did not convince me to burn my hymnbooks, get a CCLI license, and buy a synthesizer.

I believe there is a place for new and contemporary elements in Lutheran worship. I do not believe Luecke's book is the place to look for the definition.

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The Word Goes On: Sermons by Dr. Siegbert W. Becker. Compiled by James P. Becker. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992. 302 pages. Cloth.

It has been impressed upon me by several veterans of the pulpit that reading one sermon a day will provide the preacher with a steady diet of encouragements and correctives for his own preaching. If he takes this to heart, any book of sermons published for illustration, evaluation, and devotion will serve the parish parson well. This collection of Dr. Becker's sermons was compiled after his death in 1984 by his son. The intent of this book of sermons is simply stated: of benefit, not only to pastors as they prepare their sermons, but to anyone who wanted to grow in the faith. It is not a collection of sermons from one particular year, but sermons selected from a time period of the 1940s

through the early 1980s. These sermons were all taken from recorded sermons at St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church, Milwaukee. There may be a lesson in all of this: Don't allow your sermons to be recorded, as they may be used at someone else's discretion and for another's purpose! Dreaded is the Sunday that the preacher knows he missed the point of the gospel, but received rave reviews during coffee hour.

That being said, the reader will find much that is helpful in Dr. Becker's words, much that will serve him even in private prayer. Each Sunday of the church year is addressed, including sermons for the festival days, mission days, Thanksgiving, sanctity of human life, and stewardship. Scripture passages that serve as the basis for each sermon do not follow any present pericopal system. As the title is only a suggested one, and therefore a suggested theme at best, it seems best to review this work by applying the definition for preaching given by my homiletics professors: An authoritative public discourse, based on a text of Scripture, centered in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, for the benefit of the hearer.

Dr. Becker seldom strays from that which does not have ties or import to Jesus Christ. The reader will appreciate the Christocentric value here. Certainly one need only read recent books and publications to agree that this cannot always be said about sermons prepared by preachers, even Lutherans. The good news of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection is all the more appreciated in this work when it is stacked up against other publications.

It is my own opinion that the style of these sermons, in their literary form, is one of catechesis. The editor of these transcriptions makes a point of outlining (literally) specific points in each sermon, as you might find in the 1943 edition of the Small Catechism. There is much value in this for today's reader who wishes to check his polished thoughts against this sainted theologian. It is my experience, however, that an increasing number of today's church members are no longer attuned to that style alone, a style that states plain dogmatic answers but bears very little illustration. (Of course, every sermon ought be catechetically correct.)

While it might be said that illustrations attempting to describe the good news and good gifts of Christ often fall shamefully short (of which Dr. Becker is not guilty), pictures and illustrations of malady are wonderful windows that prepare the heart for Jesus' good and gracious word. A little more of the latter in this work would have been appreciated for its challenge to preach the heart of the gospel (Jesus Christ) into the hearts of his people. The sainted preacher Alton Wedel, speaking at the 1967 Wenchel Lectures for effective preaching, said: "Use the words that are familiar to your people! An Eskimo sat in his igloo, reading a Shirley Temple fairy tale collection to his little boy. 'Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,' began the father, when the son broke in to ask, 'Daddy, what's a corner?'"

As preachers we are dogmatic, for we cannot prove the Word. Preachers proclaim the Word though, and there we must be subtle and deliberate. "The Word goes on" had better be our experience too. The Word must do its work on us and therefore must be spoken in more than catechetical rhyme.

Dr. Becker's style is constant throughout the collection. It would be unfair to pick a given sermon out of the book either to praise or to criticize. Any given reader will find one for himself. The collection is a credit to the Holy Spirit and a gift of the Lutheran Confessions. If this or any other collection is to be a gift to the preacher, it ought be used first of all as a word to him in prayer and devotion. Secondarily does it become a tool for your own sermon preparations. Should this be your style, consider it for your shelves.

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Studies in the Augsburg Confession. By John Meyer. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995. 356 pages. Hardcover.

John P. Meyer, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, completed in 1946 a series explaining the Augsburg Confession. He taught at the seminary from 1920 to 1964, and served as its president from 1937 to 1953. He primarily taught in the areas of dogmatics and New Testament Introduction. This volume is presented as a reprint, with care taken to correct the few typographical errors from the original publication in *Northwestern Lutheran.* The book has a standing history of use and respect within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and was reprinted in order to make its wisdom available to future generations of confessional Lutheran pastors.

The book is organized to follow the outline of the Augsburg Confession itself. The English text provided is that from the *Concordia Triglotta,* and it is satisfyingly faithful to the German and Latin. Where there are significant differences in the German and Latin texts, Meyer often makes the reader aware of these differences as part of his instruction concerning their meaning. He demonstrates and shares with the reader a knowledge of the Augsburg Confession that is a pleasure to experience.

When you open the pages of Meyer's book you will find him as easy to read as he is scholarly in content. It is obvious from the start that he is working with many years of experience in the formation of future pastors at a Lutheran seminary. His style reflects his exegetical background as well as his systematic theological approach. He takes each key phrase from the basic text, defines it carefully where necessary, explores its history and usage, and provides insights into how each piece of the text fits together with the Augsburg Confession as a whole. It is, in short, an enjoyable and educational read.

Meyer has a satisfying use of Holy Scripture within the body of his text, which helps to establish the credibility of his arguments. He also uses frequent support from the writings of Martin Luther and Phillip Melanchthon when there is a difficulty in determining the basic doctrines being discussed. His points could have been better supported, however, especially in doctrinal areas that are the subject of debate among confessional Lutherans, if he had included more support from the other Lutheran confessions that dealt with the same doctrinal issues. For example, it would have been helpful, and I believe appropriate, for Meyer to have included citations from the Apology if a certain interpretation was in question. As it stands, the reader is left to trust Dr. Meyer's judgment on how the Augsburg Confession should be understood in such cases.

One of the great strengths of this work is its ability to capture the central issues being discussed in each article of the Augsburg Confession in a clear and simple manner, without compromising the integrity of his research or becoming overly simplistic. He is consistent in his argumentation and does not waste the reader's time or insult his intelligence by continually repeating topics that have already been discussed. He also strives to show in each section how that doctrine is essential to a proper understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Both in terms of his personal confession and in his manner of instruction, Meyer clearly demonstrates that he fully upholds the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture. He manages to combine the basics of Christian history necessary for an understanding of the text with an application to modern issues that does not shy away from proclaiming the truth even when it is unpopular. He strives to avoid the temptation to pit Luther and Melanchthon against each other, yet remains critical of the revisions that Melanchthon made to the Augsburg Confession in order to win over the Reformed churches.

The one area in which his biblical and confessional support falls short of what was expected is in his treatment of AC V and AC XIV. This is not really surprising, given his background, yet was disappointing nevertheless due to his thorough treatment of the other basic articles of the Augsburg Confession. He does well in the beginning of AC V, as he clearly demonstrates that it is the mission of the church to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments. Yet he fails to go into any detail as to how the church is commanded by God to *carry out* that mission. Unfortunately, the treatment of AC XIV is not much more revealing. He displays an understanding of the holy ministry that is purely functional in nature by his overemphasis on the priesthood of all believers. A quotation is here in order: "When we ask, 'To whom did Christ assign the task to *teach* and to *administer the Sacraments?*' The answer must be, 'To everyone whom he appointed to be his king and priest here on earth'" (187). For Meyer, the question of "who is to do these things when we gather publicly?" is one of "love and order" instead of divine mandate and institution.

When it comes time for Meyer to discuss the doctrine of the call, he speaks strongly against a "hire and fire" approach, a temporary call, or any other action that denies the divinity of that call; yet he can provide no real scriptural basis for his arguments because he has already made the claim that there is "no special order created by the Lord" (186). This makes his concluding arguments under AC XIV ring hollow, leaving the reader desiring some biblical proof that his conclusions are valid.

Some of the confusion is alleviated later in the book, during his discussion on AC XXVIII, where he is confronted with the statements of the Augsburg Confession regarding the divinely established office of bishop and the authority and responsibility therein. He concedes that it is the pastor's responsibility under God to preach the word and administer the sacraments in the church, yet he still finds the wording of the Augsburg Confession uncomfortable when it speaks of "by divine right" (322–323). One can see that he rightly understands that it is never given the pastor to "lord it over" his flock, yet in his zeal to make sure that this is understood he seems to want to remove the pastor's authority altogether.

Despite the author's lack of precision in dealing with the confessional distinction between the office of the holy ministry and the priesthood of the baptized, this is a book worth further study by any pastor who desires to grow in his understanding of the Lutheran confessions. His ability consistently to remind us that it is the gospel at the heart of every article of the Confession, combined with his ability to teach in a simple and yet compelling fashion, makes this an excellent text for students and pastors alike. It is more than a book that studies an old confession; it is a textbook in applied Lutheran theology that is relevant for every generation of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Galatians: A Continental Commnentary. By Dieter Lührmann. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992. 161 pages. $24.95.

Like a Macintosh computer, Dieter Lührmann's *Galatians* packs powerful things into a user-friendly format. "Greekies" and the linguistically-challenged alike will appreciate its simple yet substantive content, unencumbered by the technical jargon of New Testament studies. Alongside the works of such notables as Claus Westermann and Hans Walter Wolff, this 1992 translation of Lührmann's 1978 commentary takes its place as yet another volume in Fortress Press's Continental Commentary series.

The Marburg University Professor of New Testament takes the relationship between law and gospel beyond the obvious and makes it the controlling idea for his entire commentary. On the basis of this he posits a two-part outline for Galatians (rather than the more common three-part) by suggesting that the entire first four and one-half chapters (1:11—5:12) prior to the ethical section are a defense and exposition of the gospel that Paul preached (14).

In developing this, the author demonstrates his thesis that "Paul founds his gospel on the law and asserts that the Old Testament can be understood correctly only in relation to Christ" (6). Later he clarifies the apostle's approach even further by claiming that "Paul remains within Jewish conceptual categories and argumentative processes; he does not present his critique of the law from a position outside the law" (99). Under this basic theme the entire first section of the commentary is interspersed with discussions of Paul's related antitheses (e.g. law/faith; death/life; curse/blessing; sin/righteousness; flesh/Spirit; slavery/freedom).

The layout of the volume is simple, with a fresh translation for each section of verses, followed by commentary. In addition to these two headings, occasional sections contain additional notes under the headings Form, Analysis, and Structure. Whether one is looking for help with specific verses or for an essay on Galatians, Lührmann's volume will prove easily accessible.

Not to be overlooked are the concluding pages of this commentary. A dual-columned chronology of Paul's life, drawing both from his epistles as well as the book of Acts; a twentieth-cen-

tury bibliography containing over four hundred entries; an index of scripture passages; and a name and subject index are all worth their weight in vellum.

There is little to criticize about the author's self-professed Lutheran theology. Occasionally his higher-critical biases come through, but they are rare and unobtrusive. Perhaps a curious section needing further redaction could be found in the ethical section of the commentary. In his exposition of 6:3–5, Lührmann's discussion of the value of self-examination, and the ambiguity that results from it, seems—well—ambiguous. To these American ears it sounds like a foreign injection of German psychologizing when Lührmann summarizes, "Only where this connection between justification and ethics is no longer realized does one have to appeal to institutions such as confession and penance" (116). But this is the exception.

Judging from this work, we can expect good things from the author's forthcoming commentary on Mark in the same series. Lührmann's little commentary would give any pastor a good excuse for offering yet another Bible class on Galatians. And who knows? Perhaps unlike the Macintosh computer, this user-friendly tool might gain even more than 10 percent of the market share.

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Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between. By Stanley Hauerwas. Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1988. 266 pages. Paper.

This volume is a collection of fourteen of Hauerwas's essays, most of which date from the mid 1980s. Hauerwas's essays here focus on issues of ecclesiology, ministry, and service. Hauerwas assigns a definitive relation between biblical narrative and Christian identity. In Hauerwas's perspective, Christian moral philosophy should be understood as an ethical agent's attempt to live congruently with the distinctive narratives of the Christian tradition. For Hauerwas, the truth of Christian faith and life is expressed in a specific narrative, i.e., the biblical story of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ. Hence he writes, "What it means to be Christian, therefore, is that we are a people who affirm that we have come to find our true destiny only by locating our lives within the story of God" (102).

His underlying polemic seams to be both with Anglo-American political philosophies and the social stances of mainline Protestant churches. These churches, he claims, all too often tend to reflect dominant American political ideologies and culture rather than challenge them on the basis of their own inherent ethical wisdom. Hauerwas rejects a political perspective that views humans primarily as socially independent individuals who have contractually formed a social system for their own self-interest. For Hauerwas, this perspective fosters individualism and creates an anthropocentric, rather than a theocentric, outlook on the world. For Hauerwas, mainline Protestant churches tend to be Constantinian: that is, historically they have had a privileged place in American society. This privileged position has been challenged by pluralism only in recent decades. By importing the American political perspective into their ecclesiology these churches ignore the sense of the organic connectedness of confession, spirit, and life of believers in Jesus Christ. Hauerwas believes that the ethical homeground of the Christian faith is able to offer a powerful critique of contemporary individualism. Hence he wants to see the church as a subversive agent, an alternative political community (12), in American society. For Hauerwas, the church is clearly in the world, not of the world.

Hauerwas believes that the inner logic of Christian ethics entails Christian nonviolence, or pacifism. Here Hauerwas is dependent on the Mennonite thinker John Howard Yoder. Both Yoder and Hauerwas reject Luther's two-kingdoms doctrine. Indeed, for Hauerwas there is no autonomous political realm separate from Christ's lordship (10). In contrast to Luther, Hauerwas believes that Christians cannot legitimately wield the sword as God's servants. Christians are properly alien residents in the world. For Hauerwas, to compromise Christian pacifism is to jeopardize the truthfulness of the Christian message. Hauerwas seeks a thoroughgoing anti-Constantinian perspective in Christian ethics.

There are powerful and diverse religious influences in Hauerwas's thinking. From his teaching years at Notre Dame, he receives from Catholicism a strong sense of the continuity of tradition. From the Mennonites he receives an anti-Constantinian spirit that thoroughly separates church and state. Christians then transform the world by means of grace. From his own native Methodism he has the desire both to engage culture and critique it.

Lutherans can appreciate Hauerwas's sense for tradition and his need properly to distinguish Christian truth from cultural invasions or viruses into the church that distort Christian truth. Perhaps his most engaging ethical assumption is his stance on the relation between narrative and character. For Hauerwas, narrative forms character. Hence for Hauerwas, narrative (1) includes a tradition that is not autonomously chosen by ethical agents, (2) offers people a corporate life, (3) shapes individuals within community, (4) provides a pattern and meaning to life, and (5) offers an intellectual framework by which to understand and commend the Christian faith independent of metaphysical categories. Hauerwas's perspective on the narrative identity of an ethical agent is an important contribution to current theories in meta-ethics. As theological ethics, however, his perspective could be improved, in my judgment, if he accepted a two-kingdoms position that affirms the secular realm as God's arena as much as the church.

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Briefly Noted

Roman Catholic Worship: Trent to Today. By James F. White. New York: Paulist Press, 1995.

James White, a United Methodist liturgical scholar currently teaching at Notre Dame, provides readers with a concise map of liturgical changes in the Roman Church from the time of the Council of Trent to the present. White surveys the development of liturgical books, church music, architecture, popular devotions, and, to a lesser degree, liturgical theology. The final chapter, "The Future of Roman Catholic Worship," dares to make a few cautious predictions as to changes that are yet to come for the Church of Rome. Non-Roman readers will find *Roman Catholic Worship: Trent to Today* a helpful guide to understanding the roots of both the first liturgical movement, whose basic aim was restoration of ancient liturgical rites and the second liturgical movement, which sought to reform liturgical practice. White writes with clarity, sympathy, and humor.

Luther's Theological Testament: The Schmalkald Articles. By William Russell. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

The Schmalkald Articles have been largely neglected in Luther studies. William Russell seeks to remedy this neglect by providing a careful reconstruction of the history behind Luther's last will and testament, an analysis of the catholic and evangelical pillars of Luther's theology as expressed in this confessional document, and a fresh translation of the Schmalkald Articles. Russell sees the Schmalkald Articles as a thoroughly trinitarian confession centered in Christ's justification of the ungodly by grace through faith. This is a must-read book for the Lutheran pastor.

Luther Digest 1995. Edited by Kenneth Hagen. Shorewood, Minnesota: The Luther Academy, 1995.

The editor of the *Luther Digest* writes: "The genre of the digest is *sui generis,* different from the literary forms of paraphrase, annotation, precis, and the like." *Luther Digest* aims to provide a tool for use by those who wish to keep informed of leading new work on Luther and the Lutheran tradition; no attempt is made to be comprehensive. The 1995 issue of the *Luther Digest* condensations of books and articles from North America, Germany, and Scandinavia is representative of both technical Luther research as well as more practical articles demonstrating Luther's relevance to church life and pastoral practice today. Part 2 of the 1995 issue is a summary of the first half of Ulrich Asendorf's *Die Theologie Martin Luthers nach seinen Predigten.* The condensation of Asendorf's masterful treatment of Luther's preaching is worth the price of the volume. Part 3 contains digests of ten books and articles on Luther and *theosis.*

Luther Digest 1996. Edited by Kenneth Hagen. Crestwood, Missouri: Luther Academy, 1996.

The 1996 issue of the *Luther Digest* condenses the second half of Asendorf's *Die Theologie Martin Luthers nach seinen Predigten.* Six journal articles treating Luther and Bernard are summarized in this issue as well as several important articles by Bernard Lohse on Luther and Athanasius.

Letters to Ellen. By Gilbert Meilaender. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.

Gilbert Meilaender, an LCMS clergyman teaching ethics at Oberlin College, reflects on the contours of the moral life in these twenty-four letters addressed to his daughter, a college student. Some of the letters deal with the virtues of contentment, fidelity, gratitude, hope, humility, and authenticity. Other letters reflect on themes from the Decalog and topics of concern for Christian faith and life. A letter entitled "Getting a Life" is bold enough to call into question the use of lay readers in the Divine Service from the perspective of the Lutheran understanding of vocation! The publisher does not overstate the case by claiming that these letters are highly reminiscent of C. S. Lewis. Meilaender's letters are crisp in style and substantial in content. This volume would be an excellent gift to put into the hands of college-bound students.

Humanists and Reformers: A History of the Renaissance and Reformation. By Bard Thompson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.

Nine years after his death, the massive work of Drew University's church historian on the Renaissance and Reformation is finally available. Thompson's scholarship is comprehensive, setting forth the story of these two movements within the three-hundred-year framework of 1300–1600. In this attractive volume, Thompson surveys the major figures of the Renaissance and the Reformation in their social, cultural, and religious settings, probing both the bonds that drew the Humanists and Reformers together as well as the points of estrangement. The book is enhanced by 82 full-color prints and 140 illustrations.

Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin. By Cornelius Plantinga Jr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.

Plantinga, a professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, wishes to restate the classical Christian doctrine of sin, noting that the truth of the doctrine saws against the grain of much in contemporary culture and therefore needs constant sharpening. According to Plantinga, sin is trivialized or evaded in both current theological discourse and preaching. Especially insightful is Plantinga's treatment of the impact of television on the church's worship.

Reclaiming the Bible for the Church. Edited by Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.

A collection of essays by leading theologians originally presented in June 1994 at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, at a conference bearing the same title as the book. Essays by Brevard Childs, Roy Harrisville, Alister McGrath, and Elizabeth Achtemeier focus on aspects of the Bible's authority in the life of the church. Karl Donfried, Robert Jenson, and Thomas Hopko examine issues of hermeneutics. Aidan Kavanagh explores the connection between the scriptural word and the liturgy. All of the authors share, in varying degrees, the conviction that the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation is not adequate to the task of understanding the Holy Scriptures.

Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching. Edited by William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995.

Over two hundred entries are included in this book, edited by Duke preachers William Willimon and Richard Lischer. This encyclopedia includes articles in essentially three categories: (1) theological and historical studies, (2) essays related to the craft and technique of preaching, and (3) biographical sketches of individuals whose theology or preaching has deeply influenced the church. Included with each biographical study is a sermon excerpt. In addition to providing a wealth of historical information on a cross-section of great preachers of the past and present, the *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching* offers a good introduction to contemporary movements in homiletics.

JTP

Logia Forum

Short Studies and Commentary

The Ministry in Genesis

In his introduction to Luther's exegetical writings, Pelikan notes, "One of the most remarkable feats in the whole Lectures on Genesis *was the consistency with which Luther's exegesis related the manifestations and revelations of God to the ministry. Like the scene at Mamre, all these theophanies were intended to magnify the dignity of the ministry." Here are a few examples from that portion of Luther's works composed in 1535 and later.*

Thus in the Old Testament faces of the Lord were the pillar of fire, the cloud, and the mercy seat; in the New Testament, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the ministry of the Word, and the like. By means of these God shows us as by a visible sign that he is with us, takes care of us, and is favorably inclined toward us (AE 1: 309, see also 2: 46).

Consequently, the duty of a priest is two-fold: in the first place, to turn to God and pray for himself and for his people; in the second place, to turn from God to men by means of doctrine and the Word. Thus Samuel states in 1 Samuel 12:23, "Far be it from me not to pray for you and not lead you to the good and the right way." He acknowledges that this is essential to his office.

It is proper, therefore, that the ministry be praised and esteemed for the great benefits it brings. When it is abolished or corrupted, it is not only impossible for men to pray, but they are utterly in the power of the devil, they do nothing but grieve the Holy Spirit by all their action, and thus they fall into the sin unto death for which one may not pray (1 Jn 5:16; [see also. Jer 11:14]).

. . . Yet how common this sin is today among all classes! Princes, nobles, even commoners and peasants, refuse to be reproved; they themselves rather reprove the Holy Spirit and judge him in his ministers. They judge the ministry by the lowliness of the person. These are their thoughts. "The minister is poor and unimportant. Why, then, should he reprove me; for I am a prince, a nobleman, a magistrate?" Therefore, rather than put up with it, they despise the ministers together with the ministry itself and the Word. Must we not fear judgment of God like the one he pronounces here upon the first world? (AE 2: 19; see also 2: 171; 4: 66)

And so this word properly pertains to the ministry and in a manner depicts it. Every preacher or minister of the Word is a man of strife and of judgment and because of his office he is compelled to reprove whatever is wrong without regard for either person or office among his hearers. When Jeremiah did this with diligence, he encountered not only hatred, but even grave danger (Jer 20:2, AE 2: 20).

Therefore it is necessary for us to magnify the ministry of the church, that is, our glory; for faith rests not only on the promises but also on the fulfillment of what was promised. We have the Lord himself speaking with us and setting forth far more illustrious promises than those that were given to the fathers. In Baptism Christ says, "I set you free, rescue you from the power of the devil, and hand you over to My heavenly Father." Here I must conclude that Christ is not lying; and the more firmly I believe, the saintlier and more blessed I am (AE 8: 311).

It is sure that God does not make a practice of speaking in a miraculous way and by means of special revelations, particularly when there is a lawful ministry that he has established in order to speak with men through it, to teach them, instruct them, comfort them, rouse them, etc.

. . . When there is a ministry, we should not wait for either an inward sign or an outward revelation. Otherwise, all the orders of society would be confused. Let the clergyman teach in the church, let the civil officer govern in the state, and let parents rule the home or the household. These human ministries were established by God. Therefore we must make use of them and not look for other revelations (AE 2: 82–83; see also 3: 165–166).

If you deviate from the ministry and follow your own opinions, you will not only gain nothing but you will take hold of Satan as God, and will be uncertain about your thoughts, whether they are of God or the devil (AE 4: 72).

Protestant Sacerdotalism

Since the time of the Reformation, one would suppose that Lutherans have adequately defended themselves against the errors of Roman Catholicism. Lutherans reject the Romanist teaching that the Mass is an unbloody yet atoning sacrifice of Christ for both the living and the dead. Lutherans reject the Romanist teaching of purgatory. Lutherans also reject Roman Catholicism's sacerdotalism. Lutherans rightly reject such teachings because they are unscriptural and they deny salvation by grace through faith alone. You may be surprised, however, that a new kind of sacerdotalism not espoused by papists is on the move.

When you hear the words: "Your ministry here just isn't effective anymore," watch out. A Protestant sacerdotal clericalism is quietly boring into Lutheran lumber—the work of theological termites. It is a devilish species that eats its way through the foundation and frame of our house, a particularly pernicious pest, difficult to exterminate.

Sometimes when a pastor and a congregation are at odds with one another the circuit counselor advises the pastor, "Your ministry here just isn't effective anymore." Words mean what they say. First of all, the statement declares that the ministry belongs to the pastor, not the Lord. Then we are set up for the second and most sinister conclusion. The effectiveness of the ministry depends entirely on the pastor himself And since "your ministry just isn't effective anymore," it is high time someone with a better "ministry" be brought in.

Watch what happens when laypeople believe the circuit counselor's words. Some will excuse themselves from their pastor's care. The sermon, even if the pastor properly divides law and gospel, cannot be trusted. Certain members will refuse to have their babies baptized by him. Certain members will refuse to commune even if the pastor administers the Lord's Supper according to the Lord's mandate and institution. Bible class attendance drops. Some will not want him to visit them in the hospital. Why does this happen? Because the words "Your ministry here just isn't effective anymore" make the Word of God and the sacraments dependent on the man in the vestments.

It is no surprise that we use so many adjectives when we speak about what the pastor does and who he is. He has to be "exciting." He has to preach "meaningful," "dynamic," and "communicative" sermons. He has to lead "uplifting" and "powerful" services of celebration. His thinking must he "visionary." He must be "creative." And if the man cannot be that kind of a pastor his "ministry just isn't effective here anymore."

What's going on? Sacerdotalism is what's going on. Even more: Donatism is going on. Everything depends on the man. The Protestant clericalism is just as wrong-headed as the Roman Catholic kind. It is a Protestant sacerdotalism. What we have fought against for so long we have adopted without any synodical resolution or fanfare. The effectiveness of the word and sacraments depends on a man. Your ministry "just isn't effective here anymore," especially if the man doesn't have the right kind of personality, that is, if he doesn't have the protestantized indelible character of being a "people person."

Sacerdotalism and Donatism, however, are not the real problems among us. The heart of the issue is mistrust. We do not trust that God will do what he says where he promises to do his work, that is, in the word delivered at the pulpit, font, pavement, and altar. Despite all the bumper sticker sloganeering about an inspired, inerrant, and infallible Bible, we have trouble with the inspired, inerrant, and infallible scriptural truth that God the Holy Spirit works faith when and where he pleases in those who hear the gospel. That has been replaced by an anthropological center: the pastor. The effectiveness of God's word and sacraments depends entirely on him. "Your ministry just isn't effective here anymore."

The ministry *(Predigtamt)* of word and sacrament belongs to the Lord. He instituted it (Jn 20:19–23; Mt 28:16–20). The pastor is only the Lord's instrument. He is not there to call attention to himself (2 Cor 4:5). He is only there to do what the Lord gave him to do, that is, to give out the gifts of the crucified and risen Lord through the means of grace in the liturgy. Everything in the church, including the office of the ministry, depends on the Lord and what he gives in his preached and sacramental word.

Effectiveness? That is a *law* question. We do not want to be asking such questions. Instead, we confess Article V of the Augustana and rejoice in the bedrock of our confessions, the Small Catechism. There we learn that the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. . . . This is most certainly true." This is most certainly sure.

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Confess Christ or Celebrate Schweitzer?

The Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW), *in use generally by the ELCA and independently by some sympathetic LCMS congregations, lists September 4 as a day to commemorate Albert Schweitzer, "missionary to Africa, 1965." In the following extended citation, Hermann Sasse would lead us to wonder why anyone would want to commemorate someone who knew not how to confess Christ* (Reformed Theological Review *28, no. 3, 1–5*).

The author of these pages remembers from his student days, those happy years shortly before World War I, when Protestantism had succeeded in getting rid of the dogma of the Church. "Not the Son, but the Father belongs to the Gospel as Jesus has proclaimed it." This was Harnack's great discovery. The dogma of the Triune God and of the God-Man Jesus Christ was regarded as a product of the Greek mind in the Church. These doctrines were necessary for the preservation of the Gospel in the Ancient World. The Greeks had lent their philosophy to the Church, just as the Romans had put their gift of administration and organization into the service of the Gospel. These were regarded as temporary necessities, still of great importance to the Middle Ages which had taken over the heritage of the ancient culture. But it was a misunderstanding if the Reformers kept the ancient dogma. The Gospel

no longer needs these obsolete means of defence. On the contrary, they have become a hindrance to its true understanding. Christianity is essentially not a dogmatic religion.

This view corresponded with the popular conviction that the dogma was a straight-jacket that hindered the free development of true religion, an invention of priests, a product of human speculation on mysteries which essentially are incomprehensible to the human mind. The man in the street who dislikes anything that goes beyond the narrow horizon of his pure or poor reason felt justified by the great discovery that one can be a good Christian without accepting the Christology of the Church.

The great scholars of that age themselves felt sometimes that something was wrong with their theology. There were moments when they were aware of their tragedy. Harnack was sometimes quite upset by the use liberal pastors and laymen made of his thoughts. Friedrich von Hegel felt the tragedy in the life of his great friend Troeltsch. The crisis of liberal theology, or rather of that "historism" in theology which was one of the great topics if not the real theme of Troeltsch's thought, became manifest in the pathetic life of Albert Schweitzer. He spoke the last word in an era of Protestant theology in the famous conclusion of his "The Quest of the Historical Jesus."

The names once given to Jesus, in the terms of late Judaism, such as Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, he states, have become historical symbols to us. By referring these titles to Himself he indicated that He thought of Himself as a commander, a ruler. We do not find a name that would express to us what he really is. "As one unknown and nameless He comes to us, just as on the shore of the lake He approached those men who knew not who He was. His words are the same: 'Follow thou me!' and he puts us to the tasks which He has to carry out in our age. He commands. And to those who obey, be they wise or simple, He will reveal Himself through all that they are privileged to experience in His fellowship, of peace and activity, of struggle and suffering, *till they come to know*, as an inexpressible secret, *who he is…*" (A. Schweitzer, *My Life and Thought. An Autobiography.* Transl. by C. T. Campion. London, 1933, p. 71 f.). This is the key to the understanding of the great turn in Schweitzer's life. The great historical theology had spoken its last word on Jesus. This great man drew the conclusion. There is no human greatness without consistency.

I.

In silent obedience to the call of that mighty ruler, Schweitzer hoped to reach that understanding of the secret of Jesus which historical research could not give him. Has he reached his aim? We cannot know. This is a secret between him and his master which we must not try to investigate. "*Secretum meum mihi.*" One thing, however, we must state. Schweitzer's thinking in so many fields of learning has not led to a new theology, and theology always includes Christology. What we read in his philosophical books, and especially in his ethical writings where his thought comes sometimes nearer to Indian thought than to the New Testament ethics, shows that, whatever he may have come to know of the mystery of Jesus, has remained inexpressible, as he had predicted.

Why is that so? It is strange that a New Testament scholar of Schweitzer's rank has never seen that according to the Gospels discipleship is never silent obedience only. Human curiosity has not asked the question who this Jesus is. It was our Lord Himself who asked His disciples: "Whom do men say that I am?" "Whom say ye that I am?" (Mark 8:27 ff.) and who put the question to His adversaries: "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" (Matth. 22:42). Men are not responsible for the Christology. Christ Himself has created it by claiming to be what He is, by demanding from men a clear statement as to whether they accept His claim.

It is generally acknowledged today by New Testament scholarship that not only the Father, but also the Son belongs to the Gospel as Jesus has proclaimed it. The names "Messiah," "Son of Man," "Son of God" were to him not only symbols denoting an inexpressible fact, but titles that exactly expressed His divinity. He claimed to be the fulfilment of what the Old Testament had prophesied concerning the Messiah, the Servant of God, the Son of Man. One can accept or reject that claim just as did the witnesses of His earthly life. One can regard it as blasphemy as the High Priest did when Jesus made His "good confession (*kalen homologian*) before many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:13, cp. Matth. 26: 63 f. and parr.). One can regard Him as possessed of the devil (Mark 3:22 parr.) as the scribes did, or, with modern scribes, as a psychiatric case. One can accept in simple childlike faith His claim as His disciples did. Whatever attitude men may take, they have to answer the question who He was. This belongs to the mystery of His person. Wherever a man is confronted with Jesus he cannot avoid answering the question, "Who is He?" Buddha or Mohammed do not ask this question. Jesus does it. Even His bitterest enemies have to answer it.

II.

"Thou art the Christ" (Mark 9:29). This was the answer which Simon Peter gave to the question of his Lord. It was the first confession made by Simon, the spokesman of the Twelve, on their behalf, on behalf of the future church. A personal beatitude is spoken to the first confessor (Matth. 16:17): "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." This answer is not the result of human thinking. It is given by God.

Thus the confession of faith is the answer to the question which Jesus puts to man, either directly, or as a question implicitly contained in the Gospel. All creeds and confessions of Christendom are meant to be essentially a repetition and continuation of the confession that Jesus is the Christ. . . .

The confession which Peter makes is not based on inquiries and negotiations. It is not a compromise between various personal views—maybe there had been several personal views among the Twelve. Simon does not even ask his fellow-believers. He speaks for them all, as he speaks for himself. The true confession is always the confession of the individual—"Blessed art thou, Simon"—and the confession of all true believers. It is the confession of the individual believer and of the Church as a whole. A true confession can begin with the "I believe" of the Baptismal Creed which is always confessed by the individual, or it can begin with the "*pisteuomen*" of the Creed as it was formulated by a synod and confessed at the Eucharist. There is no essential difference between the "I" and the "We."

We modern men have understood the Creed mainly in the sense of the individual confession. Today we are in danger of

thinking only in terms of a collective society, the church. In the former case we forgot the reality of the Church. In the latter case we forgot the conversion is always something which happens to the individual. Individuals only can be baptized, not tribes or families. Even if a whole family is baptized, Baptism is administered to each individual, and the formula is "I baptize *thee*." This fact that in the Church of Christ the "I" and the "We" belong together is no longer understood by modern Christians, because they do no longer understand the work of the Holy Spirit. As we do no longer realize the meaning of "*Kyrios,*" so we do no longer understand the "*Pneuma Hagion,*" the "*Parakletos,*" as our careless religious language shows.

If we take it seriously that faith in Christ is always the gift of God, then we understand why the true faith and confession of the individual believer must be the same as the faith and confession of the Church. Luther in his exposition of the Third Article in the Small Catechism puts it this way: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me by His gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true Faith; in like manner as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the true faith. . . ."

Modern Christendom has tried to understand faith, the work of the Holy Ghost, psychologically, and the Church, the work of the Holy Ghost, sociologically. Hence many Christians do no longer understand that reality which the New Testament means when it speaks of the Holy Spirit and His work.

A Sure Word

Luther comments on Titus 1:10, "For there are many rebellious people, empty talkers and deceivers . . ." (AE 29: 35).

Empty talkers is a very fine title. They cannot be described more accurately. They want to be theologians when they cannot even sing. Anyone who does not know how to sing always wants to sing. Arty masters always see that something is missing in a work. This is their genius. They butt in because they are impatient with their knowledge. Some men who have been ordained here to preach at a particular place were unable to stay here. This is second nature to them. An ungodly teacher is first of all a stubborn one; then, thinking that "what you know is nothing unless someone else knows it also," they will begin to meddle. They do not wait for the opportune time, and in their speaking they put on the appearance of sanctity. . . .

They speak about a thing which they do not understand. Thus our fanatics are most truly stubborn men and vain talkers. They speak about a thing which they themselves have not experienced: "The external Word is nothing. One must first receive the Spirit." They say a lot of things like this about the Spirit, and it is sheer vanity. We have the sure Word, which tells us what to do. "The man believed the word," John 4:50; see also Romans 10:17. The truth is a sure Word, while their word is a seduction.

Not By Morals

Hermann Sasse, Here We Stand *(Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1979), 60.*

For the church does not live by morals, by the knowledge and observance of God's law nor does it live by religion, by lofty experiences of the divine and an awareness of the mysteries of God. It lives solely by the forgiveness of sins. Hence the reformation does not consist, as the later Middle Ages believed, and has even been believed in wide circles of the Protestant world, of an ethico-religious correction, of a moral quickening and a spiritual deepening throughout the church. It consists, rather, according to its own peculiar nature, of the revival of the preaching of the Gospel of forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake. That such a revival of the church's message must have important consequences also in reviving the life of its members and in renovating the external forms of the church is only natural. But these are only consequences. What the world called, and still does call, reformation of the church is only the fruit of the real Reformation, the revival or the pure doctrine of the Gospel.

Battle for the Gospel

The declaration of The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals summit, now known as The Cambridge Platform, has piqued the interest of many confessional Lutherans. It has been printed in other publications our readers are likely to have read, but if you would like your own copy of this brief statement for study purposes you may write: The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, 2034 East Lincoln Avenue #209, Anaheim, CA 92806, or call (714) 956-2873. Fax: (714) 956-5111.

In the 1970s, the International Council for the Inerrancy of Scripture made the authority of the Bible a defining issue in American Christianity. Its core members—Presbyterian pastor James M. Boice, Reformed theologian R. C. Sproul, Lutheran theologian Robert Preus, and others—threw down a gauntlet which forced denominations, seminaries, and individual Christians to make a choice between modernist liberal theology and biblical orthodoxy.

In the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the so-called "Battle for the Bible" was especially bloody, resulting in the dismemberment of the St. Louis seminary, the shattering of fellowship with other Lutheran bodies, traumatic family and personal conflicts, and denominational schism. Despite all of the carnage and not minimizing the pain of the casualties, the debate over inerrancy nevertheless served as a major catalyst in moving at least some Lutherans away from the anti-supernatural assumptions of mainstream liberal theology back to a genuine confessionalism (though other Lutherans have moved instead to American evangelicalism).

Today, essentially the same core group that raised the issue of inerrancy is concerned about another threat to biblical orthodoxy: the Church Growth Movement, feel-good sermons with their messages of self-help and pop-psychology, the degeneration of worship into empty entertainment, the "post-conservative

evangelical" theologians with their universalism and process theology, and rampant subjectivism with its minimization of sin, grace, and the atonement—all of which together constitute a theological collapse in American Christianity that undermines the very Gospel of forgiveness in the cross of Jesus Christ. Confessional Lutherans have been warning about these trends for some time, but now a significant critique is emerging from within evangelicalism itself.

Boice, Sproul, the late Dr. Preus, and others in the original Council for Biblical Inerrancy have joined forces with a new generation of neo-Reformation theologians, including the Calvinist *wunderkind* Michael Horton of CURE (Christians United for Reformation), to form the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. Its purpose is to wage, in effect, a Battle for the Gospel, and to do so by returning American Protestantism to its foundations in the Reformation—specifically, to the principles of *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solus Christus*, and *sola scriptura*.

To this end, the Alliance held a summit meeting April 17–20 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. 110 church leaders—pastors, theologians, college presidents, publishers, para-church representatives, and others—were invited to discuss the problems in American evangelicalism and to forge a response. Although most of the participants were from the Reformed tradition, the Alliance—genuinely interested in getting back in touch with Reformation theology in all of its dimensions—invited a significant contingent of Missouri-Synod Lutherans.

Because of my writings on postmodernism and the way contemporary culture is influencing the church, I had been asked to deliver a paper at the conference. With the death of Robert Preus, the other members wanted a Lutheran presence on the Advisory Council, so I was asked to serve, as was J. A. O. Preus III of the St. Louis seminary. Twelve Lutherans in all were brought to the summit: Dr. David Scaer, who was a respondent in a panel on worship, Dr. William Weinrich, and Dr. Arthur Just of the Fort Wayne seminary; Dr. Ronald Feuerhahn and Dr. Preus of the St. Louis seminary; Dr. Rod Rosenbladt, Dr. M. Leland Mattox, and I from the Concordia University system; Rev. Wallace Schulz, synodical vice-president and Lutheran Hour speaker, who gave an address on *sola fide* and *solus Christus; R*ev. Donald Matzat, KFUO radio host; Rev. David T. Melvin, and Rev. Martin Noland, parish pastors from Illinois.

In the course of the meeting, major presentations were given on the *sola*s and how to re-introduce them into the life of the church, as well as papers and panels on the state of the church and the nature of contemporary culture. In the course of the meetings, a document was drafted, discussed, and revised—"The Cambridge Declaration" designed to be studied, debated, and possibly implemented throughout evangelical circles.

The final document shows significant Lutheran influence. Law and gospel is presented as the content of biblical truth and the substance of biblical preaching. Allusions are made to the theology of the cross. Perhaps most remarkable, and what will doubtless prove most controversial in evangelical circles, is the rejection of synergism—the notion that human beings must cooperate with God by their works or decisions in winning their salvation. Instead, the Cambridge Declaration clearly affirms that God in Christ does it all. Robert Godfrey, president of Westminster Theological Seminary in California, characterized the declaration as "Augustinian," embracing much that Calvinists and Lutherans have in common, but rejecting the Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism that characterize much of American Christianity.

Of course, the document is not Lutheran as such. Missing are the means of grace and a sacramental spirituality which alone can fully restore both worship and the ministration of the gospel. The Lutheran contingent also balked at the insinuation that the Roman Catholic Church is not a true church—it does bear the marks of the church, even if it is under an Antichrist, and saving faith can be communicated through its liturgy and sacraments. The Lutheran participants signed the document only with a notation of "exceptions," saying that we do bind ourselves by the ecumenical creeds and observing that the "solicitation of Christ" is not part of the gospel. Nevertheless, the Cambridge Declaration—which is not intended as a formal confession of faith nor an ecumenical agreement—has much of value to say about grace, faith, Christ, Scripture, and "God-centered worship." Furthermore, its critique of current evangelical practices is devastating, especially insofar as it comes from the ranks of evangelicals themselves.

Ironically, at the very time thoughtful evangelicals are trying to escape their theological morass (and looking to Lutherans to help them do so), many Lutherans are plunging into the very morass genuine evangelicals are trying to escape. In light of the Cambridge Declaration, Lutherans urged to imitate evangelicals can at least ask, "Which evangelicals?" There is no longer in evangelical circles the tacit assumption that the Church Growth Movement, pop-culture worship services, and touchy-feely pieties are legitimate. As various innovations in American Christianity, so quickly and uncritically adopted, are starting to be challenged, Lutherans should take the lead rather than being the last to clamber aboard a discredited bandwagon just before its wheels fall off.

We Lutherans at the conference realized that the aberrations within evangelicalism criticized by speaker after speaker can also be found within our own church. We too, though a church of the Reformation, need to recover the Reformation "solas." The gauntlet thrown down by the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals in the Cambridge Declaration applies to us as well.

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The Power of the Keys

Wherein is the "power" of the keys to be found—in the one bestowing or in the one believing? (Is this a misleading question?) Take special note of what role "believing" has in the "power" of the keys when Luther speaks of them in the 1520s:

> Therefore, we must rightly understand Christ when he says: "Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained;" that this does not establish the power of him who speaks but of those who believe. Now the power of him who speaks and

> of him who believes are as far apart as heaven and earth." (*Sermon for the First Sunday after Easter*, 1525?, *Sermons of Martin Luther,* Lenker, 2: 362.)

Now note the role of "believing" in this second citation:

> Do you believe he is not bound who does not believe in the key which binds? Indeed, he shall learn, in due time, that his unbelief did not make the binding vain, nor did it fail in its purpose. Even he who does not believe that he is free and his sins forgiven shall also learn, in due time, how assuredly his sins were forgiven, even though he did not believe it. St. Paul says in Rom 3:3, "Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?" We are not talking here either about people's belief or disbelief regarding the efficacy of the keys [note Bergendoff's translation for *wer den Schlüsseln gläubt oder nicht* plays too freely in adding "efficacy."] We realize that few believe. We are speaking of what the keys accomplish and give (*The Keys,* 1530, AE 40: 366–367).

What has happened? In his earlier years, we know that Luther remained a bit tangled in an *opus operatum* and *opus operantis* schema, as can be seen in his Heidelberg disputation. On one hand there was the external work and action of the priest doing the sacramental work. On the other hand there was the taking to heart or believing of that act.

The question had been, Wherein does the power lie: in the work itself or in the one believing the work? Some argued that merely performing the sacrament was effective *ex opere operato.* Luther initially responded to this with the objection that *believing* was that active ingredient in making a "valid" sacrament to be beneficial and effective. This was a very Augustinian thing for him to do. But it wasn't very Lutheran.

The first quotation cited testifies to a believing that makes something effective. But what of the second? Is Luther here merely swinging back towards a more *ex opere operato* position? By no means! Readers may be thrown off the scent by Bergendoff's translation, who saw to it that words like "effective," "effectively," and "efficacy" were sprinkled around. The fox will not be treed by any but those old bloodhounds who get back to the original trail. We go on to read:

It is an abominable unbelief on the part of him who binds and looses as well as on the part of him who is being bound and loosed. For it is God's Word and command that the former speaks and the latter listens. Both are bound, on peril of losing their soul's salvation, to believe this article as truly and firmly as all other articles of faith. For he who binds and looses without faith, and doubts whether he succeeds in binding or loosing rightly or thinks to himself quite unconcernedly, "Well, if the key hits the mark, it hits the mark," that man blasphemes God and denies Christ, tramples the keys underfoot, and is worse than a heathen, Turk, or Jew. He also who is bound or loosed, blasphemes God, and denies Christ if he does not believe but doubts and despises what is done. For one ought and must believe God's Word with all seriousness and confidence. He who does not believe should leave the keys alone. He should rather dwell with Judas and Herod in hell, for God does not want to be reviled by our unbelief. It is truly not everybody's business to use the keys rightly. (*The Keys*, 1530, AE 40: 368).

Luther still talks about believing, to be sure, but it is no longer in the sense of making anything *effective.* Inefficacy is not his concern, but blasphemy.

In our own day, we see those who want to make things effective by their believing. Believing is treated as some sort of catalyst that can convert an outward action into some inward benefit. Thus one might imagine that he can "take" communion in churches of any and all confessions if only he believes, thereby making that sacrament "efficacious." Indeed, matters of doctrine seem of little consequence to those who by "believing" can make anything and everything beneficial. To do this believing apart from the content that has been given us to believe, however, is simply blasphemy.

The later Luther moved away from talking about valid and effective. He dropped the *opus operantis, opus operatum* way of thinking. His concern was not with what was powerful, but with what was salutary. We too, then, are best directed when the office of the keys is extolled not because of what power lies therein, but what grace.

JAB

Silent Women

A two-part article entitled "Scripture and the Exclusion of Women from the Pastorate" was published in the August and December 1995 issues of Lutheran Theological Journal. *This essay, produced by the Rev. Dr. John W. Kleinig of Luther Seminary in Adelaide, summarizes numerous presentations made in response to students who requested theological and biblical bases for the teaching and practice of the Lutheran Church of Australia. This excerpt comes from the August 1995 issue, pages 79–80.*

Paul's demand for the silence of women is explained in two ways. On the one hand, they are not permitted by God to be 'speakers' in the liturgical assembly. While the verb *lalein* is used in many different ways in the New Testament, it is never used in the sense of chattering [editor's note: as if they were making too much noise and commotion during the service]. Here, as is often the case, it is a synonym for authoritative teaching (e.g., Mt 9:18; 28:18; Jn 18:19–20; Acts 4:1; 18:25; 1 Cor 2:6–7; 2 Cor 2:17; Heb 13:7). On the other hand, the silence of women involves subordination. Remarkably, Paul does not mention the object of their subordination. While it has been taken as the general subordination of women to men or the subordination of wives to husbands, the context suggests that they are to be subordinate to the male teachers of the word and so to the word itself. Women are therefore not allowed to be speakers in the liturgical assembly but must be subordinate to those who have been appointed to fulfill that role.

The context shows that Paul insists on relative rather than absolute silence (cf. also Lk 9:36; 20:26; Acts 12:17; 15:12; 21:40). It is clear that women may speak in tongues (1 Cor 14:5, 23), prophesy in worship (1 Cor 11:5; 14:5, 23, 31), and engage in liturgical prayer (1 Cor 11:5; cf. 1 Tim 2:1–10). The kind of speaking which

Paul prohibits is defined in three ways. First, a woman may not "act as a speaker in a liturgical assembly" (14:35; cf. 34). The usual absolute form for "speaking" indicates that Paul may be using it as a technical term for someone authorized to speak in an official capacity (Johansson, 53 f). This prohibition, however, does not apply at home and would therefore seem to have nothing to do with the subordination of a wife to her husband.

Secondly, the forbidden speaking is associated with God's word which has come to Corinth via its apostolic emissaries from Jerusalem (14:36; cf. Acts 1:8; 1 Thess 2:13). We may therefore conclude that its content was the application of the apostolic teaching entrusted to the leaders of the congregation.

Thirdly, while the 'speaking' which Paul has in mind here is related to prophecy and the questioning is connected with the weighing of prophecy in the congregation, it is nevertheless distinguished from prophecy and is more authoritative than prophecy, since it transmits the commands of Christ and demands acquiescence of prophets to it (14:37–38). I therefore conclude that when Paul forbids women to act as speakers in a liturgical assembly of the church, he excludes them from the apostolic ministry of the word.

Who for Us Men

It is doubtful that in all the history of the evolution of language there has ever been a more concerted effort to manipulate minds by means of grammar than we see in connection with the feminist movement. Languages have been known to evolve over long periods of time, whether through atrophy (the gradual deterioration of grammatical forms) or through blending with other languages, or through any number of forces playing upon speech whose effects cannot be measured but through the course of language's progress through the centuries.

But the modern feminist movement in America has of late been enjoying considerable success in its efforts to force this evolution at a much quicker rate, and in a preconceived direction, to meet its own ends. Most noticeable has been a full-frontal assault on the generic use of the word *man,* as in mankind. Journals and publications of the highest caliber in America are noticeably careful to employ gender-neutral generic references. Perhaps the most common replacement for the generic "he" is "he or she," sometimes shortened to "he/she."

Universities are the most careful in this regard. At Marquette University, for example, one *requirement* for acceptability of doctoral dissertations is that they employ no "sexist" language, which is to say that they be gender sensitive (a requirement mercifully ignored in my own case). Sometimes writers attempt to be creative, alternating a masculine generic pronoun with a feminine generic pronoun. One scholarly paper presented at Marquette even went to the length of giving a specific hypothetical person with a name to each instance, necessitating a generic reference. Alternating genders were seen in each successive use of such a hypothetical person throughout the paper.

It is worthy of note that there has been no concerted effort to force such an evolution of language in the British Isles, where there remains a healthy respect for tradition. Since Britons have always tended to be very careful about guarding the things they have created, and since English is the creation of England, the phenomenon is understandable if no less remarkable to this American, who recently had occasion to make the observance firsthand. In a recent conversation with Sister Benedicta Ward of the University of Oxford, I learned just how American is the forcing of gender correctness on the language. According to Sister Ward, such attempts in scholarly papers to be "gender-neutral" would actually be frowned upon, since according to British standards of English usages, to say "he or she" in place of the generic "he" would be redundant and hence poor grammar. It is perhaps less feminist than boorish by British standards to impose such contrived fixations upon our language.

It is not merely grammatical propriety that is of concern to theology, however. Efforts in American churches to speak "correctly" abound, as most mainstream churches attempt to reduce all specific references to gender, even when speaking of God all for the fear of alienating women who might feel less than fully represented in their expressions of their god if he must be addressed as our Father but not also as our Mother. Such fears are reminiscent of the god of Feuerbach and Marx, a god who as they say is nothing more than a projection of the collective mind of his or her people. Yet these fears, which we would expect to be prevalent among the ecclesiastically profligate, tend also to drive even the most conservative among us to avoid ever using the male pronoun in a generic sense. And this is true even though it is precisely the generic sense of the pronoun that comes closest to our understanding of who God is.

Our talk about God is generally anthropomorphic, that is, ascribing what we associate with human things to the divine. We do it because the Bible does it: the Bible refers to God as Father and Son, which are labels that among ourselves we universally ascribe to males. So when the Scriptures refer to God as Father and employ the male pronoun, it is not because God the Father Almighty is male, nor have we ever believed that. Rather, it is because of the way in which we are created. God created the entire human race by creating Adam, a male. There in Adam himself were both the ingredients of male and female. The proof of this was the creation of Eve out of Adam. She came from within him. Therefore, the creation of a male was in the image of God, and the creation of a female was in the image of the male, as St. Paul also says, 1 Cor 11.

Thus while God is not ontologically male, yet there is something specific in the male gender that has a better correspondence to God than in the female. This correspondence, of course, is clearly revealed in the incarnation of God as the male Jesus Christ. Yet none of this is to suggest the exclusion of females; on the contrary, the feminine principle derives from and is included within the male principle (this is also biologically true, interestingly, when one considers the fact that X and Y chromosomes are both present in the male). Therefore it is most appropriate to refer to the entire race as men or mankind, for this includes, by virtue of the way things are and have been created, both male and female in principle.

Some who have argued that since Greek has two separate terms, *anthropos* and *aner,* for the generic and the gender-specific

man respectively, therefore the English has been deficient in this regard and adjustments were needed, including the invention of words like "chairperson," "mail carrier," and so on. Yet the Hebrew, which also has two separate terms, gives *ish* for the gender-specific and *adam* for the generic. Yet *adam* is the name given to the first *man,* both as the title for the whole race as well as for his own specific name, but not specifically to the first woman, nor ever specifically to any woman, though every woman is implied in the generic use of *adam.* Thus it is that the English term man, when used in both a generic and in a gender-specific sense, is even arguably an improvement over the Hebrew, for it implicitly contains, every time it is used, the notion that all men, generic, came from one man, specific.

Thus it is no wonder that as soon as the feminists succeeded in teaching us to stop referring to the human race as *men* or *mankind,* there were presently found among us also questions over whether it is appropriate to confess that Jesus was made *Man* for us *men* and for our salvation. These questions occur even in as ostensibly uncompromising a church body as the Wisconsin Synod, with its alarming alteration of the Nicene Creed in its new hymnal. Perhaps, the reasoning evidently goes, the references to Jesus as man could be reduced, especially in places where it is a translation of the generic *anthropos,* in order to avoid giving offense. We Americans are all being trained, in the most subtle of ways, to speak "correctly" in order that we might learn to *think* "correctly" as well.

Meanwhile in the ELCA, where the training is anything but subtle, overt attempts are repeatedly made not only to erase all sexually insensitive references to the human race, but as well to push, in the spirit of affirmative action, for an exaltation of womanhood to a position of generic domination, as we hear familiar phrases forcibly contorted to achieve this reverse, as in "sisters and brothers," or as in the evolution from the generic phrase "he or she" to the new "she or he." (Strange, is it not, that no one ever thought the phrase "ladies and gentlemen" to be unfair to men.)

Yet in the ELCA there are also voices of dissonance, which fall on hopelessly deaf ears, in part because even the dissonant voices themselves have become rather weak and sickly. An example of this comes in the November 1993 *Lutheran Forum* in an article entitled "Liturgy, Theology, and Ethics: The Promise and Danger of an Alternate Eucharistic Setting," by Linda and John David Larson. This article makes a valiant attempt to stem the tide by expressing uneasiness and even a bit of grief over the recent ELCA publication of an alternative eucharistic setting for use with the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, entitled "Now the Feast and Celebration." The writers are uneasy, to wit, over this publication's evident aversion to the use of the masculine gender to refer to God, as they complain that "sometimes the name of the triune God is avoided to the detriment of our prayer, our faith, and our Christian life." Indeed they even agree that "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not sexist terms, but are inclusive language at the heart of Christian life, the Christian way of naming the Triune God" (33). Yet at the same time they express preference for the new translation of the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds by the *English Language Liturgical Consultation* (the ELLC), claiming that it is more faithful to the Greek because, among other things, it reduces the male pronoun in reference to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

One wonders just how sincere is these writers' expressed belief that the terms Father and Son are evidence of inclusive language. Evidently it is improper to refer to the Father or the Son as *him.* These writers want it both ways: they want to retain some semblance of catholicity, for they know that changing the name of God is going too far; yet they want to fall in line with those who claim the use of the male pronoun in a generic sense, even when referring to God, is insensitive toward women. How else could we explain a reluctance to refer to the Father or to the Son as "him"? But sensitivity requires the selection of terms less likely to give offense. Thus while they may not wish to go so far as to deny the biblical appellations for God (though many have indeed gone this far), yet they can do their part to lessen the offense that might be given by paying heed to how or how much they have to use them, or at the very least by removing the male pronoun or gender when referring to the human race.

It is therefore clear that certain theological deformities have resulted where there have been feminist intrusions into the grammatical structure of the language. This is likely to be due, moreover, to a corresponding shift in patterns of thought under the influence of "femspeak." For this reason there is perhaps warrant for an intentional retention of the generic *man,* not only in the Nicene Creed's reference to Christ who "was made *man,*" that is, the second *adam,* generic and gender-specific at once, but also in the creed's generic reference to the human race, as in "for us *men,*" since the implied linkage in kind (between Christ the man and us men) would otherwise be lost; and not only there, but also in recovering an allowance of *any* generic use of *man* to refer to the human race (as man), in order that the specifically male Christ might not be seen as excluding in his incarnation those who are female.

Confirmation children who hear the generic *man* are already becoming bewildered (because of vigorous training in femspeak in the public schools), leading confirmation instructors to think they must employ gender-neutral terminology. Perhaps they would be better advised to tell these children, especially the girls, that they ought not let anyone exclude them from the race of *men* just because they are women. Tell them they belong, for *Adam (man)* is their father too. For in the final analysis, either we stubbornly confess that Christ became man for us men, or we will be faced with a deficient understanding of the all-sufficient masculinity of the incarnation of God, born of a woman.

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On Being Put

The exposition of 1 Tim. 1:12–17 can hardly be anything less than a Christum expositum *when the Rev. Dr. Norman Nagel is put in the pulpit:* expono, exponere, exposui, expositum*: "quia fidelem me existimavit ponens in ministerio." The following sermon was put before a congregation on the Thursday of Pentecost 17 in the Chapel of Sts. Timothy and Titus, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.*

Put. θέμενος. Aorist participle, middle. There it is—done been put—no doubt about it. The Lord leaves no doubt when he gives his gifts. And so, no doubt who puts, who is put, where he is put, and what that is for, and who does that. Are you with me? Or more importantly, are you with the text?

Put, θέμενος, divine middle. The Lord involves himself. He does it. He has put—aorist. He, Christ Jesus our Lord. Can't blame the apostle, it wasn't his idea, or as Dr. Luther says *passim,* "You put me here, so it's up to you to jolly well see it through"—or words to that effect. Why our Lord did it has no other sure answer than that is the sort of Lord he is. The apostle confesses there's no reason in himself for the Lord to have done it. Quite the opposite. "The grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant . . . overflowing for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." "In Christ Jesus" is how come he's been put.

That there is someone put is in the verb. Even the Lord can't do a put without someone put. No doubt who is put. "Me," says the apostle, who is writing to Timothy, who gets put a few verses later—and put into the same thing, place, ministry, διακονία—and there isn't any διακονία without a διάκονος. The "where put" is the ministry and that is not going on there unless there are those to and for whom it is going on there. As AC V says it, where the means of grace are going on, that is where they are being given out, where there are those to whom the gifts are thus being delivered. Pithily put by Dr. Chemnitz: where there's preachers and hearers, there's the church.

What the ministry is for the Augsburg Confession confesses quite clearly, as does the apostle writing to Timothy, put into the same apostolic ministry with him (Phil 1:1). The apostle even gets *Predigtamt* right: the faithful saying, λόγος, message, words, worthy of all acceptance, that's faith. Those who accept the apostolic preaching (Acts 2:41) were baptized, were added to the church, where faith is created by the Holy Spirit in those who hear the Gospel. AC V. How can they hear without a preacher (Rom 10)? "You preacher, apostle, minister." Thus Christ Jesus our Lord put me, Paul, and also Timothy, so it may be even you.

It's too much. "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor 2:16). Not me, says Paul. But yet he put me into his ministry. If he could put me in, persecutor and blasphemer, that should tell you something, Timothy. That's just like him, a pattern, which makes it clear that no one is beyond the range of the forgiveness which is "in Christ Jesus." No sin is so big he hasn't answered for it.

Forgiveness/believing is referenced surely only to Christ. Having been put into the ministry is referenced surely only to Christ Jesus, our Lord. He's the one to blame; he's the one to thank.

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me." 1 Timothy 1:12. Those whom he puts into the ministry, he enables, which is his gift, χάρις, *Amtscharisma.* "Do not neglect the gift which was given you when the prophets spoke and the body of elders laid their hands on you" (1 Tim 4:14).

Most of you have not yet been put. What our Lord puts a man into the ministry for is the delivering of salvation's gifts (AC IV), which he does through his instruments of the means of grace, his words, his sacraments, into whose service he puts those whom he puts into his ministry, a ministry which *he* does, and thus, Holy Ministry. He does it with his words, his faithful sayings, which is what the seminary is here to stuff you full of, that the Lord may, we pray, then have good use of. And with his words comes his enablement, his Spirit, who brings his word to acceptance. That is faith.

So, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Nevertheless there was mercy even for me in Jesus Christ. For you, too. Amen.

> The laying on of hands is not a human tradition; it is God who makes and ordains ministers. . . . I must be certain that my work is not mine but God's, who works through me. Baptism is a work of God, for it is not mine, although my hands and mouth are there as instruments. . . . You should not doubt that, as Peter says, it is God's strength [1 Pet 4:11; "by the strength which God supplies"] (WA 43: 600, 25–27; AE 5: 249–50).

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Timely Communion Practice

An attractive and informative twenty-seven-page booklet entitled Open, Close, Closed? *is available for about $1 per copy from Angel Bright Publications, 704 N. Jefferson St., Roanoke IL 61561, or by calling Rev. Edward Engelbrecht [lit. Angel Bright, in case you were wondering] at (309) 923-5251. This excerpt comes from pages 10–11.*

When archaeologists were digging at Dura Europos in Syria, they discovered the earliest remains of a church. They were surprised to find that there was a separate room next to the sanctuary. This room was used for communion [see B Baggati, "Dura Europos," in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. by Angelo Di Bernardino (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) vol. 1, p. 255]. The congregation would move into this room for the communion part of their worship. Those who were not members would not have been able to enter this part of the building.

Today everyone stays seated in the church whether they receive communion or not. But in the earliest days of the church, those who could not commune were dismissed before that part of the service began. A deacon would close the doors after they had left. This is why it is called "closed" communion, from the closing of the doors for the communion service [see Norman Nagel, "Closed Communion: In the Way of the Gospel; In the Way of the Law," *Concordia Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (1991) pp. 20–29. The endnotes are especially helpful].

The name "close" communion seems to have come from modern Baptist practice in America. It began to be picked up by some Lutherans in the early part of this century. In our day it has begun to replace the traditional expression of "closed" communion. In many cases, it is not just a change in name but a change

in practice as well. Those who feel they agree with what a church teaches about communion are permitted to come to the Lord's Supper even though they have not been thoroughly instructed at that church. The popularity of the term "close" seems to be that it sounds less harsh than the word "closed." The difficulty is that it is also less clear.

Churches that practice closed communion [The Association of Reformed Presbyterian churches, Eastern Orthodox churches, Roman Catholic churches, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod] are not doing anything new or strange. They are, in fact, holding to an age-old practice. Already in about the year A.D. 150, more than 1800 years ago, a layman named Justin wrote about it. He said, "And this food is called among us the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to eat but the one who believes that the things we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and for the new birth, and who is living as Christ commanded us." [*The First Apology LXVI, the Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., Inc., 1994), vol. 1, p. 185.]

Justin is telling us that in his day, the first generation after the apostles, not just anyone could receive communion. Everyone who received the sacrament was to be baptized, united with the congregation in faith, and living according to Christ's word. Communion has always meant union. It has been "closed" from the earliest days.

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