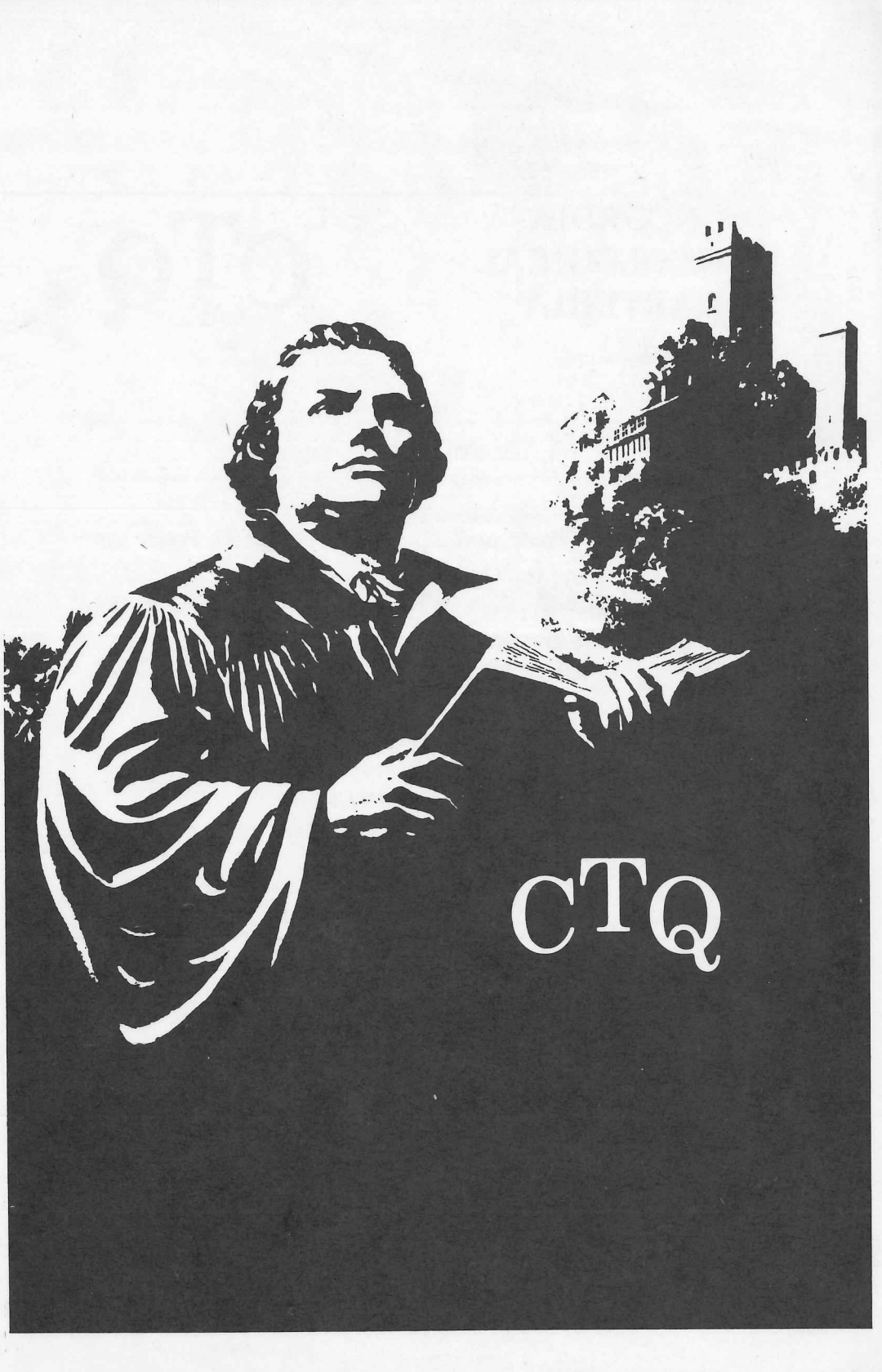
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Can The Lutheran Confessions Have Any Meaning 450 Years Later?

Robert D. Preus

This is a simple question, but momentous and inescapable for every Lutheran today. The answer to the question, directed as it is to the president of a Lutheran seminary, is supposed to be yes. And such an answer is surely expected at a congress which has not merely a scholarly and historical purpose, but a confessional one as well. The question and similar questions have, of course, been asked hundreds of times during the last four centuries. And the resounding answer, from the time of Leonhard Hutter's *Concordia Concors* to Hermann Sasse's **Here We Stand,** has seldom varied. Yes, yes, we wish to remain Lutherans, faithful to our confessional heritage, and we can. Yes, our confessions have meaning also today.

But if the question seems simple, the answer is not. A pietist, a Bultmannian, a synergist, a Barthian, a charismatic, a Marxist, a millennialist, a positivist may all claim to be Lutheran and faithful to the Book of Concord according to their understanding of it. And in some sense they will maintain that our confessions convey meaning also today. I suppose that few subjects are more controverted today among Lutherans than the nature of confessional subscription, the force of our symbols' biblical basis, the hermeneutics of the Lutheran Confessions and their validity, the nature of Lutheranism, and even the truth and relevance and meaning of basic Lutheran doctrine.

Since I cannot in such a short time settle or even clarify any of these problems related to our basic question, may I simply answer our question once more with a resounding yes, and then list some reasons why, also in our secular day when religion and theology have lost their hold on millions who still may call themselves Christian and Lutheran, it is possible and right to affirm that the Lutheran Confessions have meaning today.

1. *The language of the Lutheran Confessions is cognitive and conveys meaning and knowledge about God, man, sin, grace, and salvation.* I make this assertion against all forms of neo-orthodoxy and so-called "biblical theology" which advance the theory that God reveals Himself and man experiences his presence and power through "acts" of history (G. Ernest Wright and Reginald

Fuller) or "encounter" (Emil Brunner) and not at all through the Word of God (Scripture, preaching) and doctrine (teaching) as cognitive discourse. I also reject the claims of linguistic analysts and positivists that biblical language is not in any sense cognitive and bears no meaning, but is only emotive (Herman Randall, Jr.) or merely "metaphysical" (Carnap) or expresses merely man's thoughts about God — in other words anthropology (Bultmann *et al.*).[1] I cannot refute all these claims on biblical, empirical, or rational grounds here. But suffice it to say, I agree with Sidney Hook,[2] an atheist, that such theories concerning the nature of theological language in the Bible or in Christian confessions repudiates Christianity in the historic or confessional sense at its very root.

2. *The meaning of the Confessions has remained and will remain constantly the same.* I make this assertion against the curious option of Krister Stendahl and others[3] that the meaning of a given biblical pericope and thus also *a fortiori* of all theological language (e.g. in our creeds and confessions), changes through the years — has a history, as it were. The historian, or interpreter, thus must seek the "meaning then" and the "meaning now" of theological assertions, terms, and doctrine found in the Bible and other theological literature of the past. This bizarre, Prometheian attempt to be true to the descriptive tasks of historical criticism and at the same time to apply the text today is based on the assumption that the text as it stands, its *sensus literalis* and *sensus unus,* is either untrue, inapplicable, or irrelevant today. I encountered a classical example of this method of approaching a text not long ago at a LCUSA meeting. A professor quoted I Corinthians 14:34; he granted that Paul's prohibition concerning women speaking in the church included in his day the forbidding of women to enter the office of the public ministry, but he maintained that today the text teaches and demands that women be ordained into the public ministry. Against such a sophistic hermeneutic our confessions speak of the "*unalterable* truth of the divine Word," "the pure, infallible, unalterable Word of God," and "the infallible truth of the divine Word" (*Introduction to the Book of Concord* 4).

3. *The meaning of our Confessions as they draw their doctrine from Scripture's divine truth cannot be overthrown, falsified, or mitigated.* By this statement I wish to reject the Barthian presupposition concerning the finitude of language in the sense that it cannot once and for all and infallibly speak the truth about God. And I wish to assert that human language can be and is used by the Holy Spirit in Scripture to express infallibly His will and

mind to human beings. And I also wish to assert that our ecumenical creeds and Lutheran Symbols, as they articulate the articles of faith, adequately express the mind of God Himself, as He has, of course, only partially revealed it, in Scripture. *Theologia ectypos* in our Confessions and drawn from Scripture is identical, as far as it goes, with the *theologia archectypos* in God. By way of illustration, a confessional Lutheran who affirms that the Confessions have meaning today will side with the Jesuit John Courtney Murray who contends for the immutability of the Nicene dogma concerning the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father against Warren Quanbeck, a Lutheran who can only concede, "Our confession of the Nicene Creed is our recognition that given the fourth century situation we stand with Athanasius against Arius on Trinitarian and Christological issues."[5]

4. *After four hundred and fifty years the confessional Lutheran will affirm that the Confessions are today, as then, a correct exposition of Scripture.* The Confessions exhibit a representation of the heavenly doctrine, "the truth of God" (FC-SD, Rule and Norm, 5). We deny exegetical relativism. We also deny that only with the advent of historical-criticism and other methods of approaching Scripture and other ancient documents can we be certain of our historical and exegetical conclusions. I recall an incident years ago where I met for the first time the president of a very large non-denominational seminary. His first words in our mixed theological company were, "There is no passage in the Old or New Testament where modern, theological, and exegetical scholarship has not found deeper meaning than Luther could have found in his day." I replied by asking him to illustrate how this was true in the case of Romans 3:28. I do not recall that he had any answer. To me it is remarkable that the exegetical conclusions of Luther (e.g. concerning the church, justification, faith, grace, the Lord's Supper, baptism, etc.) are not only still tenable and cogent, but supported solidly by the most thorough studies of contemporary exegetes. All this is important when we consider that a Lutheran, although he may not accept every detail of exegesis in the Confessions, does subscribe to the exegetical conclusions (the doctrine) of the Confessions. Today, four hundred and fifty years later, the Lutheran can subscribe the Lutheran Confessions in reference to their cognitive content *because* they agree with Scripture.

5. *The Gospel center of all Christian theology according to the Lutheran Confessions is the article of Christ and His work, which we accept by faith* (LC II; Apol. IV, 2, German text, *passim;* SA II, II, 1). This is so today too as Christians preach, teach, and confess the faith and proclaim the Gospel.

In conclusion, it occurs to me that I may not have understood the intention of the question to which I was requested to address myself. Perhaps the question was not clear and not even meant to be. Are we merely asking whether the sixteenth century Confessions have a cognitive content today? Or are we concerned about the contemporaneity and relevance of the Lutheran Confessions after 450 years? Or is the issue of confessional authority and confessional subscription? If any or all of these concerns constitute the intention of the question, then I submit that all five points I have made are most germane and valid.

In Robert Nisbet's latest book, *Twilight of Authority,* the statement is made, "In most ages of history some one institution — kinship, religion, economy, state — is ascendant in human loyalties. Other institutions, without being necessarily obliterated, retreat to the background in terms of function and authority. History is, basically, the account of the succession of institutional authorities; or rather we should say succession and repetition, for if we look at any given area long enough over a period of time we cannot help but be struck by the fact of recurrence."[6] I think we must concede that nowhere in western civilization today is religion, much less Lutheranism and Lutheran theology, ascendant in human loyalties, not even in any subculture! If such loyalty, or commitment, to Christ and the Gospel and the evangelical Lutheran confession is ever to recur and gain ascendancy, even in synods or congregations or individuals, the five points I have made will need, I believe, to obtain.

FOOTNOTES

1. John Herman Randall, *The Meaning of Religion for Men* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968). John Herman Randall, *The Role of Knowledge in Western Religion* (Boston: Starr King Press, 1958). See Morton White, ed., *The Age of Analysis* (New York: George Braziller, 1957), pp. 209 ff. Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament,* tr. Kendrick Grobel (London: SCM Press, 1955), II, p. 239, *passim.*
2. "The Atheism of Paul Tillich," in *Religious Experience and Truth,* ed. Sidney Hook (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), pp. 59-64.
3. Krister Stendahl, "Contemporary Biblical Theology," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* ed. George Arthur Butterick *et al.* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), I, pp. 419 ff.
4. Theodore G. Tappert, tr. and ed., *The Book of Concord:* The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), pp. 5, 8, 12.
5. Warren A. Quanbeck, "Some Questions from Lutherans to Roman Catholics" in *The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church* (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1965), p. 9; cf. passim.
6. Robert Nisbet, *The Twilight of Authority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 24.

Augustana VII and the Eclipse of Ecumenism

Siegbert W. Becker

Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, short as it is, has many implications for the whole subject of ecumenicity, whether of the true or false variety. At the very outset the definition of the church given in the first paragraph of that article ought to alert every confessional Lutheran to the dangers of the prevailing false ecumenicity of our time in which men bend their best theological and ecclesiastical energies and efforts toward the building of a superchurch which bears only a superficial resemblance to a communion of saints, at least in the biblical and confessional meaning of that term, a church whose unity is in reality a denial of the true unity of the church and whose head may well be the bishop of Rome, of whom our confessions say that he is to be considered "ipsum verum Antichristum."

The anticonfessional nature of that kind of ecumenicity ought to be evident from the fact that to many of its proponents the pope of Rome seems to be the logical head of such a united church. In the guidelines prepared for the dialogs being carried on this month between Lutheran and Catholic local congregations, Lutherans are being asked

> if they are able to acknowledge not only the legitimacy of the papal ministry in the service of the Roman Catholic communion but even the possibility and desirability of the papal ministry, renewed under the Gospel and committed to Christian freedom, in a larger communion which would include the Lutheran churches.[1]

The question being proposed here is so worded that it is made clear from the very beginning of the discussion that an affirmative answer is expected to the first half of the question and that a negative answer to the second half would almost seem to be an attack on the Gospel. But the crucial question that will have to be answered first of all before either half of the above question can be considered seriously is the question, "What does one mean when one speaks of the Gospel?"

Not only the Augustana's definition of the church but also its identification of the marks of the church as the correct teaching or the pure preaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the holy sacraments sounds a clear warning to every confessional Lutheran against the kind of ecumenicity which openly asserts that love unites while doctrine divides, an ecumenicity which for

that reason in times past was inclined to avoid the discussion of doctrine altogether.

Some may object that this stricture no longer applies, at least in Lutheran circles; but before we sing any Te Deums, it would be well for us to remember and to realize that the present willingness to discuss doctrine is in many cases no more than lip service to the need for confronting and surmounting doctrinal differences; for such concessions have invariably been coupled with demands for freedom for all participants in the dialogue. This simply means that it is tacitly agreed that any discussion of doctrine will be carried on in a framework in which it is assumed that whatever the outcome of the discussion may be, no doctrinal discipline will ever be exercised, but that each participant will continue to be considered as a brother in the faith with whom fellowship in a greater or lesser measure can be practised, provided only, at least in more conservative circles, that certain boundaries are not overstepped. What those boundaries are is hard to determine and their fixation is usually left to the individual participant in the discussion, a process which may lead to outward unity but actually promotes inward fracture, and in reality does very little to impress the world with the unity of the Christian Church.

But while the definition of the church and the identification of the marks of the church, as we find them in the Augsburg Confession, have very definite ecumenical implications, the sentence of the seventh article which speaks perhaps the loudest word in regard to the modern ecumenical enterprise is the first sentence of the second paragraph: "For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments."

That sentence is perhaps also the most misunderstood and most abused statement in all of the Lutheran Confessions. The question that has been asked repeatedly is this: "What does the Augustana mean when it speaks of the 'doctrine of the Gospel'?" The answers have ranged all the way from the one given by Bishop Einar Billing of the Church of Sweden, who held that the Gospel is the simple message that "God is near us," to that given in the Formula of Concord, namely, that it is "the doctrine in all its articles." To Billing's credit it must at least be said that he recognized that his definition of the "Gospel" or the "Word of God" was not in harmony with the teaching of the Formula of Concord. Anyone who with an open mind reads the preface to the Book of Concord in the context of Reformation history knowns that what Article X of the Formula meant when it spoke of the "doctrine and all its articles" is nothing less than the sum total of

all the teachings of Scripture. It can surely be said that Franz Pieper caught the spirit of Article X when he wrote,

> In all Scripture there is not a single text permitting a teacher to deviate from the Word of God or granting a child of God license to fraternize with a teacher who deviates from the Word of God.[2]

The True Unity of the Church

Franz Pieper and those who hold the view which he espouses in those words have often been accused of not being satisfied with the "satis est" of the confessions and of demanding more for the true unity of the church than the Augsburg Confession requires. It has often been argued that since the one holy Christian church includes also believers in heterodox communions, therefore it is possible to have church fellowship with them and to practise this fellowship publicly in order to give outward testimony to the unity which exists between all members of the *una sancta.* Therefore the true unity of the church of which the seventh article speaks cannot consist in doctrinal unity, and the Augustana must mean something other than full doctrinal agreement when it speaks of the true unity of the church. The confessors were not ignorant of this argument. Aegidius Hunnius takes note of it in a series of theses on church and ministry, in which he says that a consensus in doctrine is not opposed to the unity of the Spirit but rather included in it.[3] It may also be that such thoughts might have been in the mind of Melanchthon when he added the adjective "true" to the phrase "the unity of the church" in the final draft of the Augustana.

It is true that Article VII does not address itself directly and explicitly to the question of church fellowship or unionism, nor does it speak expressly of the kind of activity that is carried on today in the modern ecumenical movement. A pluralistic society such as we have here in America, and in the whole world for that matter, where all churches, including the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Satan have equal standing before the law with worshippers of the Holy Trinity was a situation which the Reformers could not have envisioned in their wildest dreams. Even less imaginable for them would have been the concept of a pluralistic church organization in which truth and error could exist more or less peacefully side by side. They consciously rejected the idea of a church in which there was not doctrinal discipline and where, in the words of the Formula of Concord, controversies were not settled and removed "betimes, without long and dangerous digressions."

A glance at the preface which Luther wrote for the "Instructions for the Visitors" in 1528 will clearly demonstrate the truth of such an observation. The great reformer there expresses the hope that all the pastors of Electoral Saxony will "without any compulsion" accept the guidance of the visitors. But this "without any compulsion" was not to be interpreted to mean that each one was finally to be allowed to go his own way. He makes it clear that if there are pastors who do not agree with the doctrinal stand to be proposed by the visitors they are not to be tolerated in the church. He says, "We must separate these from ourselves as chaff on the threshing floor and refuse to accommodate ourselves to them." He threatens to call upon the elector to carry out his obligation "to so order things that strife, rioting, and rebellion do not arise among his subjects." What he has in mind with those words becomes very clear when he cites the example of Constantine, who called the bishops to Nicea and "constrained them to preserve unity in teaching and faith." And then, very significantly, he closes his preface with a reference to the same passage which is quoted at the end of Augustana VII. He writes, "What would happen if there were to be disunity and disagreement among us? . . . So let us be on our guard and anxious to keep (as Paul teaches) the spiritual unity in the bond of love and peace."[4] It is very obvious that for Luther the spiritual unity of which Paul spoke in Ephesians included also unity in doctrine.

Modern Lutherans seem to have a great deal of difficulty with such a concept of unity. They ask, "If it is true that the Gospel in the narrower sense is one of the basic marks of the church and if faith can be kindled by the basic promise of free forgiveness for Christ's sake, then how is it possible for a consistent Lutheran to demand more for unity than the basic, central message of the Gospel?" Those who ask such a question have simply not understood what Article VII is trying to say to them.

It should be evident that while Article VII does not address itself directly to the problems we face in our confrontation with modern ecumenism, yet this article does have clear implications also for the practice of church fellowship and, as such, it ought to give direction to all confessional Lutherans in regard to the whole question of our attitude toward the modern non-confessional ecumenical spirit. And if the voice of the Augustana would be heeded by those who have pledged themselves to it, this would indeed result in the eclipse of ecumenism.

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 ac-

tivities. To avoid misunderstanding it probably needs to be said that we recognize very clearly that the unity spoken of here is the unity which exists invisibly in the *una sancta,* the one holy catholic church, made up of believers scattered all over the world, in the church militant, together with all the saints gathered before the throne of the Lamb, in the church triumphant. Melanchthon says, in his comments on this article in the Apology, "We are speaking of true, that is, spiritual unity, without which faith in the heart, or righteousness of the heart before God, cannot exist" (Apol. VII — VIII, 31).

Someday someone might well explore the question of why Melanchthon says that faith cannot exist without spiritual unity rather than that spiritual unity cannot exist without faith. But whatever the answer to that question may be, it remains true that "faith in the heart" is the bond which joins men together in the invisible unity of the one holy church. It is not correct to say, as Conrad Bergendoff said in 1961 at one of the meetings that led to the formation of the Lutheran Council in the United States of America, that "faith unites the believer with God" but that "love unites fellow-believers within the church."[5]

The same faith that makes believers children of God also makes them brothers and sisters in the same family. While it is certainly true that love is the bond of perfection which will endure long after faith has been replaced by sight, yet there is no true Christian love without faith, and the love that unites us with God and with all our fellow-Christians of all times and places grows only out of faith and is perfected only by faith, by that faith through which we have the forgiveness of sins. It is this forgiveness alone that makes our love for God and our fellow-men what it ought to be by covering all its imperfections with the perfect righteousness of Christ. For this reason also the imperfection of our love does not destroy the unity we have with God and with other members of the one holy Christian Church, the body of Christ. For our lack of love, which is a sin, is forgiven by God freely for Christ's sake, and this forgiveness, pronounced in the Gospel, is accepted only by faith.

But, as Hunnius says, this spiritual unity we have with one another through faith is not opposed to consensus in doctrine, but rather includes it. There are not two different brands of unity, but only different facets of one unity. Since the unity of the church is a unity of faith in the heart, it follows that whatever creates, nourishes, strengthens and sustains faith in the heart is really inseparable from the promotion and preservation of this unity. And whatever undermines, weakens, or destroys faith in the heart

is a threat to that unity. We are not taking seriously the admonition of the apostle to preserve the unity of the Spirit when we tolerate any kind of false doctrine in the church, and, together with Luther, we ought to pronounce a curse on that love and that unity which is preserved at the expense of the Word of God. Faith is nourished by the pure preaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the sacraments. False doctrine cannot create and nourish faith. It is a constant threat to faith and for that reason also to the unity of the church. Therefore the seventh article of the Augsburg Confession says, "Ad veram unitatem ecclesiae satis est consentire de doctrina evangelii et administratione sacramentorum."

The "Doctrine of the Gospel" In Modern Lutheranism

All Lutherans subscribe to this sentence, but to say that this joint subscription is a united confession is pure hypocrisy. Just as the essence of Scripture is to be found in the message conveyed by the inspired words, so a united confession does not consist in saying the same words but in saying the same thing. And modern Lutherans no longer seem to know what the "doctrine of the Gospel" really is.

And so we ask, "What is the doctrine of the Gospel of which the seventh article speaks?" This is the question that has agitated modern Lutheranism as it seeks to come to terms with the pressures of ecumenism. Those who have yearned to be part of what they consider to be the wave of the future have sought to reduce the doctrine of the Gospel to its lowest common denominator, namely, the doctrine of forgiveness. Thus David Truemper, a pastor of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (according to the 1979 *Lutheran Annual*), formerly assistant director of programming for the Lutheran Hour and presently a member of the theological faculty of Valparaiso University, has written,

> The traditional LCMS insistence on maximal and prior doctrinal agreement as a condition for church fellowship is in need of revision. It distorts the idea of the church, perverts faith, and elevates doctrinal formulations above and in opposition to Christ and the one gospel and sacraments. In its stead, Lutherans would do well to grow up into their confessional posture and recognize and maintain the unity that already exists among the several Lutheran bodies, and not condemn one another on the basis of external matters like ceremonies and doctrinal formulations. Enough is enough.[6]

One may be inclined to ask how serious a man can be who holds that the true unity of the church consists in agreement with the Gospel in such a narrow sense and yet lives and works and fellowships in a church which he clearly condemns as being "in opposition to Christ and the one gospel and sacraments." On the other hand, one is just as inclined to wonder how men who hold the position which Truemper so clearly condemns as being in opposition to Christ and the gospel can kneel at the same altar with men who share Truemper's convictions. The whole situation is only another concrete illustration of the axiom: "Wenn mal die Kirchenzucht zu Grunde faellt, dann wird selbst die Unterschreibung der Bekenntnisschriften zur lauter Heuchelei."

Truemper's definition of the "doctrine of the Gospel" was already proposed by Conrad Bergendoff in the meetings that led to the formation of LCUSA and apparently proved no obstacle to the kind of fellowship that is practised in LCUSA. At one of the meetings in 1961 he said, "To claim that there must be perfect observance of all that the church teaches before fellowship can exist is to go beyond Scripture."[7]

This same point of view is set forth even more explicitly in the LCUSA report on the "Consultation on the Function of Doctrine and Theology in the Light of the Unity of the Church." In that report it is said that the representatives of the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church,

> while affirming their continuing commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as witnessed in the Lutheran Confessional writings, have tended to emphasize the historical character of those writings and to maintain the possibility of dissent from confessional positions that do not deal directly with the Gospel itself, such as some aspects of the confessional position of the fall of man into sin and the nature and interpretation of Holy Scripture.

Under such presuppositions the "theological consensus" spoken of in that same context cannot possibly be the unity of which the Augustana and the Formula speak.

But before such a group as this it is hardly necessary to cite this evidence. In large measure we are all aware that even the most conservative mainstream Lutheran bodies have in practice, if not in principle, adopted the view that Melanchthon was speaking of a limited Gospel when he wrote Article VII. They shrink from a modern application of Luther's words, "We must separate these from ourselves as chaff on the threshing floor and refuse to accommodate ourselves to them." Thus Bishop Rost of the Selbstaendige Evangelische Lutherische Kirche has written that

for SELK there are no other marks of the church than "die schriftgemaesze Evangeliumsverkuendigung und die stiftungsgemaesze Sakramentsverwaltung," but those beautiful words are then followed by the conclusion that for this reason it is not necessary to agree in regard to the inerrancy of Scripture and an "especially uncompromising position in matters of church fellowship" (ein besondere kompromiszlose Haltung in Fragen der Kirchengemeinschaft").[8]

Over against all such "limited subscription to shrunken confessions" the synod to which I have the privilege and the joy of belonging stands unreservedly for a full commitment to all that the confessions say and, beyond that, to all that the Scriptures say. We recognize that there are many theological and practical questions to which the confessions do not address themselves. To us "the doctrine and all its articles" or "the doctrine of the Gospel" includes also every teaching of the Scriptures which is not delineated in the confessions. We will not be deterred from such a position by the charge that we are going beyond the confessions or that we want to add more confessions to the Book of Concord. The confessors of four hundred years ago did not shrink from the idea of adding to the Book of Concord. We are prevented from doing that because Lutheranism has lost the ability to say, "Our churches with common consent do teach . . . . and we condemn those who teach otherwise." The formulators of 1580 had settled the controversies of the preceding decades by producing the Formula of Concord and in the preface to the Book of Concord they made the promise that if new controversies should arise those disputes would also be settled without long and dangerous digressions.[9] In the historical context of those words we must certainly see in them a promise to produce whatever confessional documents might become necessary.

In that spirit E. C. Fredrich has written in the foreword of the 1980 volume of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* that during the coming decade

> in all probability there will occur some sort of federated or merged union of the LCA and the ALC and the infant AELC. The basis will be a shared subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. This will, however, be a limited subscription to shrunken confessions.
>
> There will be much self-serving concern on the part of those uniting that all who do not join or approve their union are "going beyond" the Confessions. We frankly admit that we "go beyond" the Confessions as the union prospects subscribe to them. But to call for an unequivocal commitment to

all the doctrinal content of the Confessions because it faithfully reproduces the doctrinal content of the Scriptures is to stay within the Confessions as the confessors wrote and underwrote them four hundred and four hundred and fifty years ago.

There will be much celebrating of confessional anniversaries in the months ahead. One cannot, however, expect that any celebrating of the Confessions by those who limit their subscription to them will actually improve the situation. Before that can be accomplished there will have to be a "going beyond" the Confessions to that which is their source, their *norma normans.* Only full allegiance to the Holy Scriptures can motivate a full commitment to the Lutheran Confessions. God grant that we and many others are guided by the Holy Spirit to such allegiance and commitment.[10]

The "Doctrine of the Gospel" as the Confessions Understand It

We see, therefore, in modern Lutheranism a wide cleavage in the definition of the "doctrina evangelii." If our vaunted "shared subscription" to the Confessions is to mean anything at all, we must first learn to agree on what the Confessions meant when they spoke of the "doctrine of the Gospel." Until we have answered that question in agreement, it will continue to be reprehensible hypocrisy to speak of a "shared subscription" on the part of all who call themselves Lutheran.

We have already noted that the Formula of Concord speaks of agreement in the doctrine and all its articles as the unity for which the confessors were striving. It is often said that those who want to define "the doctrine of the Gospel" in the wider sense appeal to these words of the tenth article of the Formula as justification for their point of view. Such a statement is, of course, correct, but unfortunately the impression is often left that this is the only evidence to which we can appeal for such a wider definition of the "doctrine of the Gospel."

However, the wider definition of "the doctrine of the Gospel" can definitely be established even without an appeal to the Formula. This wider definition is already implicit even in the brief wording of Article VII itself. It has been pointed out repeatedly that in Article VII "the doctrine of the Gospel" is not contrasted with other doctrines. Rather "the doctrine of the Gospel" is distinguished from "human traditions." When Melanchthon spoke

of "the doctrine of the Gospel" he was not in any way selecting one specific doctrine out of the sum total of the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. Such a selection would have been unthinkable even for Melanchthon, and for Luther it would have been horrendous.

The whole Augsburg Confession itself is a refutation of the claim that Melanchthon was thinking of the Gospel in the narrower sense when he spoke of the true unity of the church. It is clear, for example, that he did not consider the doctrine of original sin to be an expendable doctrine, and yet this doctrine surely is not part of the doctrine of the Gospel in the narrower sense. In this connection a Finnish defender of the wider definition has written,

> If it sufficed to think of the Gospel only in the narrower sense, the Augsburg Confession with its twenty-eight articles and the rest of the confessional writings would have been drawn up, accepted, and confessed in vain."

That "the doctrine of the Gospel" included far more than the message of free forgiveness for Christ's sake is also manifest from the many passages of the Apology which do not equate this particular doctrine with the doctrine of the Gospel, but rather speak of it as the "chief doctrine" of the Gospel. So, for example, it is said the doctrine of justification is "the chief topic of Christian doctrine" (Apol. IV, 2). Tappert's translation, "the main doctrine of Christianity" blunts the force of the original, which calls justification the "praecipuus locus doctrinae Christianae," while the German text says that the controversy over justification is "ueber dem hoechsten, vornehmnsten Artikel der ganzen christlichen Lehre."

In a similar way the doctrine of repentance, which is defined as contrition worked by the Law and faith worked by the Gospel, is called "the chief topic of the Gospel" (XII, 3). In the same context the "remission of sins" is called the "chief topic of the Gospel." The designation of the doctrine of repentance as the chief topic, or *locus,* of Christian doctrine is repeated in a later article (XXIV, 40). In Article XV of the Apology the righteousness of faith, faith in Christ, and the consolation of consciences together are called "the most wholesome part of the Gospel" (XV, 42). The identification of the doctrine of forgiveness or even the much broader topic of repentance as the chief *locus* or article of the Gospel demonstrates beyond all doubt that the Gospel as the author of the Augsburg Confession understood it included much more than the basic message of forgiveness.

A. Aijal Uppala goes so far as to say, "Not once do these confessions use the word 'Gospel' in the narrower sense, as distin-

guished from other points of doctrine.[12] This judgement will be confirmed by an unbiased study of Melanchthon's use of the word in both the Augustana and the Apology. While he does use the word Gospel in a narrow sense, this is always done in a context in which the Gospel is distinguished from the Law. I would challenge anyone to find one clear passage in either confession in which Melanchthon, in his use of the word "Gospel," distinguishes the gratuitous promise of forgiveness for Christ's sake from any other part of the Gospel in the narrow sense.

Truemper is therefore completely unjustified when he defines the Gospel in the narrower sense as "the central article of forgiveness for Christ's sake."[13] Such a definition of the Gospel in the narrow sense is absolutely foreign to the confessions. In the confessions the Gospel in the narrow sense includes everything in the Bible that is not Law. Truemper's attempt to make such a view sound ridiculous by speaking of "hedging it [that is, the central article of forgiveness] about with all manner of other assertions of doctrine" is a cheap shot not worthy of serious attention. Truemper's Gospel is not the Gospel in the narrower sense. It is Gospel-reductionism at its worst. There is not a single passage in the confessions where the word "Gospel" is used in the way he wishes to have it understood.

Bergendoff makes a similar mistake. He says that the "doctrina evangelii" is "what the NT proclaims as its fundamental truth." In that connection he says that Luther and his colleagues were forced by the course of the Reformation "to make more precise what is the substance of the New Testament." If only Lutheran scholars would do more reading in Luther and a little less repeating of worn-out cliches which they have adopted from others, who, in turn, have not read Luther much or well. We have all read the evidence for such a presumed change in Luther's thinking about the New Testament and the Word of God a hundred times, because it is always the same evidence. But Luther's remarks about James prove just the opposite of what the Gospel reductionists would like it to prove. His threat to quote Christ against Scripture is a protest against a false use of Scripture. Melanchthon expresses Luther's thought in different words in the Apology (III, 148).[15] And, finally, Luther's frequently quoted remark from the American edition in which he is translated as saying that the Word of God is the Gospel is an inexcusable mistranslation. Luther's views, contrary to Bergendoff's statement, reinforce the usage of the confessions, which never allow us to understand the Gospel in the limited sense that is so often foisted upon it.

In fact, there are many places in the Apology where Melanchthon uses the word "Gospel" as a name for the Bible as a whole, or for the sum total of all Christian doctrine, both Law and Gospel. In the Fifteenth Article of the Apology, for example, Melanchthon says that the adversaries "rail at the Gospel" and then he gives a long list of sermon topics that are treated in Lutheran preaching, which in that context are obviously intended to show what kind of "Gospel" it is that is proclaimed from Lutheran pulpits. The first six topics listed there would perhaps be part of the Gospel defined in a very narrow sense, but then he goes on to list prayer, its efficacy and effect, the cross, the authority of magistrates and civil ordinances, the distinction between church and state, marriage, etc. (Apol. XV, 43).

Many times Melanchthon simply equates the Gospel with the Scriptures. We cannot in the time available to us begin to make anything like a complete list of all the passages in which he alternates between the use of the terms "Gospel" and "Scriptures," and in which he evidently uses them as synonyms,[16] but here again it can be said that the Formula was absolutely right when it said in commenting on a statement of the Apology that "the term Gospel . . . sometimes is employed so that there is understood by it the entire doctrine of Christ" (FC-SD, V,3). Melanchthon says, for example, that the "Gospel convicts all men that they are under sin, that they are subject to eternal wrath and death" (Apol. IV, 62). But where is the Lutheran scholar who does not know that the Apology speaks in this way?

It might, however, not be a waste of time to call attention to the passage in the Apology's article on the church which speaks of the "pure doctrine of the Gospel" as one of the "outward marks" of the church. The German translation, in which Melanchthon had a very active hand, transtates the Latin "puram evangelii doctrinam" with "wo Gottes Wort rein geht." That passage all by itself ought to establish what Melanchthon meant with the "doctrine of the Gospel." There can be no doubt that "Gottes Wort" in the language of the confessors meant the whole Bible. This is already evident from the Preface to the Augsburg Confession, where the Lutheran princes say that this confession was offered to show "what manner of doctrine from the Holy Scriptures and the pure Word of God has been up to this time set forth in our lands, dukedoms, dominions and cities, and taught in our churches" (8). So also in the Preface to the Apology Melanchthon charges the Roman theologians with having "condemned several articles (of the Augsburg Confession) *contrary to the manifest Scriptures* of the Holy Ghost" (9), while in the same context he says, "We hold

the Gospel of Christ correctly and in a pure way" (15f.). In the Augustana article dealing with ecclesiastical power the "Gospel" is clearly equated with "the canonical Scriptures of God" (XXVIII, 21). An unbiased reading of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology will convince the unprejudiced that the doctrine of the Gospel is the totality of the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures.

The Temptation to Narrow the Concept of the "Doctrina Evangelii"

Nevertheless we must admit that the temptation to narrow the concept of "Gospel" is always with us. The narrowing of the concept "Gospel" is especially tempting when the pure teaching of the Gospel is viewed as a mark of the church. Even those who hold unreservedly to the plenary inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures are inclined to fall prey to that temptation. In our innate rationalism we are often prone to think that only the Gospel in the narrowest, the very narrowest sense, namely, the gratuitous promise of forgiveness for Christ' sake, has the power to bring men to faith.

In some ways this is a normal mistake to make. When all the verbiage is stripped away this promise is the object of faith, as the Apology reminds us. Where this promise is not found there can be no faith. Unless the gratuitous forgiveness for Christ's sake is preached purely there is no Gospel. Not even the account of Jesus' death or the doctrine of His deity or of the Holy Trinity are Gospel when those doctrines are divorced from the gratuitous promise of forgiveness for Christ's sake. This is what makes the papal system the mystery of iniquity that it is. Therefore also the Augsburg Confession and the Apology regularly speak of the adversaries as enemies of the Gospel, even though Melanchthon is fully aware that these men did not deny the vicarious suffering of the Savior or the deity of Christ, or dozens of other doctrines that are part of even a rather narrow concept of "Gospel."

From the fact that the Apology clearly asserts that, where the promise of free forgiveness for Christ's sake is not proclaimed, there can be no faith, many have concluded that wherever this promise is proclaimed the Gospel is being rightly taught or preached in accord with a pure understanding of it, even if other fundamental doctrines are openly denied.

A concrete illustration of this argument is found in the oft repeated propositon, which is accepted as an axiom even by many conservative Lutherans, that no one has ever been converted by the doctrine of verbal inspiration or of biblical inerrancy.

Incidentally, while many are inclined to think of two distinct doctrines when they hear those terms, we ought to recognize that they are two terms for the same concept. A verbal inspiration which results in anything less than an inerrant Bible is pure, unadulterated nonsense.

It is, however, true that just as the deity of Christ could be proclaimed without preaching the Gospel, so verbal inspiration could be taught without preaching the Gospel in accord with a pure understanding of it. The doctrine of verbal inspiration as confessed, for example, by Jehovah's Witnesses becomes a part of a false prophet's disguise and is parallel to the truths the devil spoke to Eve in the garden of Eden, and an illustration of the words of Shakespeare, who tells us that the instruments of darkness tell us truths, win us with honest trifles, to betray us in deepest consequence.

But when the doctrine of verbal inspiration is coupled with the free promise of forgiveness for Christ's sake, it becomes the purest Gospel. And who, in view of the total lack of Scripture evidence, would really dare to say that the Holy Ghost could not use this doctrine to bring us to faith in the promise? The doctrine of verbal inspiration reminds me that it is God Himself who says through the hand of the Apostle John that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses me from all sin. No man has a right to believe that his sins are forgiven unless he has a promise from God to that effect. And verbal inspiration assures us that we have such a promise from God Himself.

Augustine tells us that he found rest for his restless heart by reading the last verse of the thirteenth chapter of Romans. I wonder how many of us would think of trying to bring a man to faith by quoting that verse. But we need not cite the case of Augustine. We have a biblical illustration even more graphic than the conversion of that saint. One of the first disciples, Nathanael, was brought to the conviction that Jesus was the Son of God and the promised Messiah by the statement of Jesus that he had been under a fig tree when Philip called him and invited him to come to Jesus. We have here a powerful demonstration of the principle enunciated in the confessions when they tell us that man comes to faith "ubi et quando visum deo," where and when it pleases God. "You were under a fig tree" at first glance hardly seems to be part of the Gospel in a wider sense, or should we say in the widest narrower sense. But it was this apparently insignificant remark which triggered that eloquent confession of faith, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel."

And just as this seemingly insignificant statement of Jesus led to a most significant confession of faith, so any doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, if it is proclaimed in connection with the gratuitous promise of forgiveness for Christ's sake, may be the power of the Holy Ghost, who is operative in all of God's Word, become the straw that breaks the camel's back and brings the sinner to repentance to make him a member of the one holy catholic church.

Once that is understood we will also realize that every denial of any doctrine of the Bible will be a threat to the unity of the church and dare not be tolerated in the church without doing violence to the true unity which ought to exist there. If we have a love for men's souls and if we want to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we cannot, we dare not, give room to the least error. Only so will the true unity of the church be preserved and the evil influences of modern ecumenism finally be eclipsed.

Footnotes

1. James Johnston, "Chapter and Verse," *The Milwaukee Sentinel,* Jan. 12, 1980.
2. Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), III, p. 422.
3. Philip Press, "Some 16th Century Theses Based on Articles 5, 7 and 8 of the Augsburg Confession," *Wisconsin Theological Quarterly,* XLIV (1967), pp. 181 f.
4. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds., *Luther's Works* (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House and Fortress Press), XL, pp. 272 f.
5. *Essays on the Lutheran Confessions Basic to Lutheran Cooperation,* NCL and LC-MS, 1961, p. 11.
6. David Truemper, "How Much is Enough?" *Missouri in Perspective,* VI, 23 (Oct. 8, 1979), p. 6.
7. *Op. cit.,* p. 13.
8. *Informationen,* 22 (Oct. 10, 1979), p. 9.
9. Preface to the Christian Book of Concord, *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 25.
10. E. C. Fredrich, "The Foreward to Volume LXXVII: The Quarterly's Confessional Commitment," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly,* LXXVII (1980), p. 5.
11. A. Aijal Uppala, "It Is Enough" — "Satis Est," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly,* LXV (1968), p. 183.
12. *Loc. cit.,* p. 173.
13. *Loc. cit.,* p. 5.
14. *Loc. cit.,* p. 7.
15. *Triglotta,* p. 197.
16. Cp., e.g., AC XXVIII, 21, 34 f.; Ap. II, 4-50; IV, 86-117, 200; VI, 37-75; XXIV, 61-95.

Melanchthon versus Luther: the Contemporary Struggle

Bengt Hägglund

Luther and Melanchthon in Modern Research

In many churches in Scandinavia or in Germany one will find two oil paintings of the same size and dating from the same time, representing Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon, the two prime reformers of the Church. From the point of view of modern research it may seem strange that Melanchthon is placed on the same level as Luther, side by side with him, equal in importance and equally worth remembering as he. Their common achievement was, above all, the renewal of the preaching of the Gospel, and therefore it is deserving that their portraits often are placed in the neighborhood of the pulpit. Such pairs of pictures were typical of the nineteenth-century view of Melanchthon and Luther as harmonious co-workers in the Reformation. These pictures were widely displayed not only in the churches, but also in many private homes in areas where the Reformation tradition was strong.

In modern research, however, the difference between the two reformers is often over-estimated and overplayed. Melanchthon's theology is represented not only as a deviation from Luther's, but also as the beginning of the decline of the theology of the Reformation. In a manner historically untrue, Luther has been considered the only real Reformer. Yet Luther himself declares his high esteem for the contributions of Melanchthon. Luther accepts him as the leading spokesman of the Reformation on many important occasions. We are prone to forget the core of truth present in the idea expressed by the old pairs of pictures of the two cooperating reformers.

In many respects the idea that the Reformation was the common work of Luther and Melanchthon corresponds to the facts. There were, in fact, many others who also made very fundamental contributions, so that we rightly call them "reformers" too. But the two outstanding personalities were Luther and Melanchthon. We know that Luther himself appreciated his co-reformer as his most valued colleague, whose skill, learning, and depth of theological insight were of the greatest importance for the entire Reformation. The differences between Luther and Melanchthon have often been underlined, not only by modern theologians since Ritschl and Harnack, but also by sixteenth-cen-

tury theologians, especially by the so-called Gnesio-Lutherans. The meaning and relevance of these differences, however, have often been misinterpreted.

The learned and skillful way in which Melanchthon interpreted evangelical theology was gratefully accepted and highly esteemed by Luther. In much modern research, however, it has often been evaluated in a negative way: Melanchthon did not really understand the deepest intentions of the Reformation, and with him began the decline of Lutheran theology. The blame is laid partly on the influence of contemporary sixteenth-century philosophy and the combination of theology with philosophical education which was introduced by Melanchthon. Clearly this evaluation is untenable. There is no evidence that Melanchthon really failed to understand the intentions of the Reformation or the theology of Martin Luther, or that we in our time have understood the Reformation better than he did. It is true, however, that Melanchthon had definite reservations concerning Luther's teaching at some points. His deviation from Luther on these points was not a misinterpretation but the result of conscious theological considerations. How to estimate these doctrinal differences between Luther and Melanchthon has been widely debated in modern research. But such debate is not peculair to our time. Also the theologians in the sixteenth century itself and the great Lutheran theologians at the beginning of the seventeenth century had decided opinions about Melanchthon's deviations from Luther.

Points of Difference in Doctrine

(a) Free Will

One of the points where the theological differences between the two reformers came to the fore was the question of free will and predestination. Melanchthon's declarations in the later editions of his *Loci* that the free will of man includes an ability to accept divine grace have been characterized as a form of synergism. His formulations were, therefore, rejected in the Formula of Concord, yet without mentioning Melanchthon's name. An unqualified charge of synergism would, however, be wrong, since Melanchthon never denied the "sola gratia." His theory was founded on definite psychological considerations, and he raised thereby a problem that had to be solved by Lutheran theology. The later theologians were forced to formulate their theological answer and position with great skill and clarity, in order to avoid a synergistic misinterpretation. The doctrine of "free will" in Lutheran theology is the result of long and intricate discussions, evoked by the so-called synergism of Melanchthon. The final

solution was not identical with the standpoint of Melanchthon, nor with that of Luther, but was rather a combination of both of them.

(b) The Lord's Supper

Another crucial point in the relationship between Luther and Melanchthon was the interpretation of the Lord's Supper. Melanchthon tried to find formulations that were acceptable also to other "reformers," such as Bucer and Oecolampadius. He was partially successful in the Wittenberg Concord of 1536, when Luther and Martin Bucer both agreed to a formula which was partly repeated in the Formula of Concord. But soon after 1536 Melanchthon came close to schism with Luther on this point, and the negotiations of 1536 did not lead to a lasting unity between the Lutherans and the other "reformers." In his new formulation of the Augustana, in 1540, Melanchthon took a further step in search of unity between the different Protestant parties. The altered article on the Lord's Supper was not contrary to Luther's doctrine, but it was also open to a Calvinistic interpretation. This form of compromise was later commonly rejected in the Lutheran churches as an early example of a false ecumenism. The Cryptocalvinistic party in Wittenberg in the sixties and seventies of the sixteenth century could rely on Melanchthon in some respects; but there is no strong reason to assume that he himself was a "cryptocalvinist" or a "Philippist" in his doctrine of the Lord's Supper. He was convinced of the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, even if his explanation of the mode of presence was not quite the same as Luther's. A new investigation by Swedish theologian Tom Hardt, indeed, tries to show that Melanchthon shared the same Christological standpoint as Luther, namely, that the body of Christ did participate in the omnipresence of God Almighty. Hardt argues that in his doctrine of the Lord's Supper Melanchthon taught the presence of the body of Christ on the basis of His divine omnipresence. Since this omnipresence was not limited to the divine nature of Christ, Melanchthon's view was not a spiritualistic one but rather was identical with the Lutheran doctrine best enunciated by John Brenz, the reformer of Württemberg.

Melanchthon's efforts to find a Protestant unity in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper are in many respects similar to the attempts in our days to unite the Lutheran and Reformed churches in common doctrinal formulas. I think we have much to learn from Melanchthon's achievements and from his mistakes. His deviations from the standpoint of Martin Luther on this point left to later Lutheran theologians the task of finding the right course

between the Roman Cathlic doctrine of transubstantiation and Calvinistic spiritualism. It seems evident that there is more clarity to be attained in this task than can be found through the compromising formulations of Melanchthon. But his desire for doctrinal unity with the different Christian groups of his time was significant and should never by forgotten.

Church Policy

The tension between Luther and Melanchthon concerned not only doctrinal questions but also the church politics, the way in which they developed, declared, and fought for an evangelical confession. Once again, our point of departure will be Melanchthon's position. We will especially pay attention to the important role he played at two crucial moments in the development of the Reformation, the diet of Augsburg in 1530 and the Interim debate in the latter part of the 1540's.

(a) Augsburg (1530)

Melanchthon's first biographer, Joachim Camerarius, tells us that when Melanchthon was sent to the diet of Augsburg in 1530, it was his wish that the confession on which he was working might be subscribed only by the theologians, so that it would be clear that this document was a matter only for the teachers in the church, a purely theological concern, not a political one. As we know, he did not obtain this wish; also the princes and their representatives participated in the confessional discussions. The complexity of the situation in those days made it impossible to handle religious questions without the intermingling of political interests. The first evidence of this truth is the fact that the whole religious controversy was submitted to a worldly diet, with the Emperor and the princes as the main participants. This way of dealing with the evangelical movement might seem to conflict with the distinction between the spiritual and the secular realms, which was a crucial point in the negotiations at the same diet (cf. Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession). Conditions being what they were, however, in those days there was no choice for the Lutherans. They had been summoned by the Emperor to come to the diet and declare their standpoint, and the evangelical princes had agreed to the summons.

In that situation Melanchthon faced the most difficult task of his life. It was a crucial moment for the whole process of the Reformation, and he had to bear the main burden of formulating the text of the declaration and of the argumentation, not only for the theologians but also for the whole assembly of the diet. In spite of the accumulated accusations from the opposing side (e.g.,

the 404 articles of John Eck) Melanchthon wrote, not a polemical apology, but a short, clear confession to what he called the common catholic faith in accordance with the old authentic Christian tradition. The solidity of his work is best shown by the fact that this document came to be the doctrinal basis of the Lutheran churches, not only in Germany, but the world over. In our day, four hundred and fifty years after the Diet of Augsburg, the same document is considered to be a fundamental text in the ecumenical discussions between the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans, a "Magna Charta of ecumenicity," as a Roman theologian, Walter Kasper of Tübingen, has called it.

This perennial interest in the Augsburg Confession need not be traced only to its irenic nature. It is true that Melanchthon expressed himself cautiously, in an unpolemic way. His interest was to show that the confession of the Lutheran teachers in no point went against the old catholic faith of the church. But it would be a mistake to say — as some of his contemporary opponents did — that he had given up or concealed something of the genuine Lutheran position and thereby deceived his opponents. A testimony of the reliability of the Augsburg Confession as a genuine expression of the Lutheran faith is the fact that Luther himself gave full assent to the way in which Melanchthon had formulated the text. Another testimony lies in the commentary which Melanchthon has given us in his Apology, formulated in connection with the Diet of Augsburg and intended as an answer to the Roman Catholic Confutation. In contrast to the Confession, the Apology contains a sharp polemic and defense of the Lutheran position, also on controversial questions that receive little or no treatment in the Augsburg Confession.

The efforts of Melanchthon and his colleagues at the Diet of Augsburg to obtain a consensus and a doctrinal peace between the two religious parties, the avowed aim of the Augsburg Confession, were soon lost and forgotten, hidden by the diet's transactions. But in the last decade, however, these forgotten attempts have been drawn back into the daylight and treated as a suitable and adequate point of departure for the interconfessional discussions of our day, together with the Augsburg Confession itself. In their Confutation the Roman Catholic theologians disagreed with many points in the Lutheran Confession; but in the committee negotiations that took place in August and September of 1530 much of this criticism was withdrawn and many misunderstandings were removed. The astonishing result of these negotiations (in the so-called committee of fourteen and then in a committee of six persons, three from each side) was that a far-reaching con-

sensus could be obtained on the main questions of doctrine treated in the first twenty articles of the Confession. The disagreements that remained mainly concerned some questions of church practice (e.g., the adoration of saints, Holy Communion in one kind, the ministry of the bishops, etc.). To prevent these controversial points from becoming a hindrance to peace, the theologians proposed submitting them to a future general council of the church. The remarkable consensus of the theologians, however, and the partly positive results of their negotiations had no political success. The diet came to an end with the Emperor's condemnation of the evangelical position and rejection of their Confession. The fact that the theologians in Augsburg had obtained agreement in most of the fundamental doctrinal questions was confirmed in the bilateral discussions of the thirties and of Rengesburg in 1541, but was then forgotten. The two parties thereafter went different ways. The Council of Trent, which began in 1545, was a one-sided Roman Catholic affair, and a polemical attitude characterized most of the relations in the years following.

Melanchthon combined in his theology and church policy two interests and two modes of argumentation: he defended the Lutheran position with sharp polemics against the Roman Catholic theology of his time; but he is also the leading personality in the theological negotiations at Augsburg, where his main concern was to retain the peace and find a tenable consensus in the catholic faith. In both cases his theological standpoint was the same, and there is no reason to assume a contradiction between the two attitudes. He has, to be sure, been criticized for his activity in Augsburg — for being too cautious and yielding too much to his opponents. The renowned utterance of Luther that Melanchthon "moved softly and lightly" is often interpreted as a negative judgment. If we read these words in their context, however, we shall find that they were meant in a positive way. Luther said in a letter sent from Coburg on May 15:

> I have read over M. Philip's Apology [the first draft of the Confession is meant]. It pleases me very well, and I know of nothing therein to be improved or changed; nor would it become me, for I cannot move so softly and lightly. Christ our Lord grant that it may bring much and great fruit, as we hope and pray.[1]

In the negotiations with the Roman Catholic theologians in Augsburg Melanchthon went as far as possible without compromising and without giving up the evangelical position. On the theological level there was no conflict between him and Luther. Luther agreed to the way in which he defended the evangelical

faith. But as regards church policy there was a difference that came to the fore, as may be seen in the letters of Luther from Coburg. Melanchthon saw the negotiations as a potential way of obtaining a theological consensus, a *pax dogmatica.* And he was eager to reach that goal; for as he judged the situation, he saw peace in religion as a necessary condition for political peace. His fears in that matter were, as we know, well founded.

Luther had come to a very different judgment concerning the situation. He had no hope for a positive result from the negotiations. He found it incredible that the Pope should give up his power and his position, and, therefore, it was his considered opinion that one could not expect that the opponents would ever really agree with the evangelical position or tolerate it. Since he, too, found it impossible to give up his theological stance, or to go back and to reintroduce into the church customs that were not in accordance with the Word of God, he had come to the conclusion that a consensus in the religious field was unattainable. In contrast to Melanchthon Luther believed that peace in the community, the *pax politica,* could be retained even with two different religious parties in the land. In a letter to Melanchthon dated August 25, 1530, Luther declared his view on the theological negotiations at the Diet of Augsburg. He stated:

> It is not in our power to place or tolerate anything in God's church or in His service which cannot be defended by the Word of God, and I am vexed not a little by this talk of compromise, which is a scandal to God. With this one word "mediation" I could easily make all the laws and ordinances of God matters of compromise. For if we admit that there is a compromise in the Word of God, how can we defend ourselves so that not all things become compromises . . . . In short, I am thoroughly displeased with this negotiating concerning union in doctrine, since it is utterly impossible except the Pope wishes to take away his power. It was enough to give account of our faith and to ask for peace . . . . And since it is certain that our side will be condemned by them, as they are not repenting, and are striving to retain their side, why do we not see through the matter and recognize that all their concessions are a lie?[2]

Luther's judgement in this case, his distrust of the merit of the negotiations, was confirmed by the actual development of the events. The negotiations were soon brought to an end, and their results had no influence upon the decisions of the diet. Nevertheless, it may be considered advantageous to the evangelical church that Melanchthon had done his utmost to exploit the possibilities

to unite the two parties and to retain peace in the church and the state. Had he not performed this task, there would have been a lingering suspicion that the cause of the schism should be attributed to the Lutheran side; but now the blame could be laid only on the papal system and the implacability of the bishops, who did not accept the preaching of the gospel.

(b) The Interim (1548)

In a passage in his Apology Melanchthon clearly stated a principle that he considered necessary and fundamental for church policy and doctrine: "It is necessary to retain the doctrine that we receive the remission of sins by grace for Christ's sake. It is likewise necessary to retain the doctrine that the keeping of the commandments of men is a useless worship." In the so-called Interim debate, eighteen years later, this principle was put on the test. Melanchthon's own failure in yielding to the rules of the Interim gave the Lutheran church an occasion to define its position concerning what here is called the "commandments of men," and in another context, the "adiaphora" (i.e., matters of indifference). The debate was of short duration, as was the struggle over the rules of the Interim; but the Formula of Concord dealt with the question again and brought it to a clear resolution (Article XII).

Already in the negotiations at the Diet of Augsburg it had been stated that indifferent church customs could be permitted for the sake of concord, even if they were not fully agreed upon, provided that they did not offend consciences (cf. Apol. XV, 52). When the Emperor had conquered the evangelical princes in the Smalcald War after the death of Martin Luther, he tried to bring the evangelical churches into conformity with the Roman Catholics through the so-called Augsburg Interim. Among its provisions were allowances for certain church-regulations, whereby many of the old customs would be reintroduced or permitted in the evangelical areas. Many Lutheran clergymen who refused to accept the Interim were severely punished; four hundred of them were banished and many evangelicals were killed. In Saxony, the center of Lutheranism, the political authorities could not hope to introduce such a document as the Augsburg Interim with its great concessions to Roman Catholic church customs. They tried, therefore, to effect a compromise, in collaboration with the leading theologians in Wittenberg. As a result, the Leipzig Interim was formulated, a more moderate form of the Augsburg Interim.

When Melanchthon and his colleagues in Wittenberg agreed to these regulations, they were moved especially by two motives: (1) Since church customs, according to the Confession, were indifferent things which could be altered according to the needs of

various communities, it was possible to yield in such questions, as long as the true doctrine of the Gospel could be retained. They considered it better to yield than that the clergymen should be forced to abandon their parishes and that evangelical preaching should come to an end. (2) They saw the whole evangelical church, with its center at the university of Wittenberg, threatened. In order to rescue the church from certain destruction by the ruling political powers they preferred to accept the Interim. It was easy to see afterwards that this decision was a mistake, a theological and political mistake. Five years later the Interim regulations were annulled, and through the peace of Augsburg of 1555 the Lutheran churches won their freedom and their right to exist under imperial law. Melanchthon himself admitted that he had been wrong in his decision in the Interim case. In a letter to his sharpest opponent, Matthias Flacius, he later wrote: "I have sinned in this matter and ask forgiveness of God."

In retrospect, however, we can say that his failure was a kind of "fruitful mistake," because it gave Lutheran theologians an occasion to clear up a difficult problem in church policy. When Melanchthon agreed to the Leipzig Interim, he encountered strong opposition from Matthias Flacius. The most important contribution of Flacius to the debate was a tract *On True and False Adiaphora (De Veris et Falsis Adiaphoris),* in which he skillfully scrutinized the whole problem of how to deal with the questions of order in the church. Flacius' main argument was that the so-called adiaphora (i.e., ceremonies, customs and other indifferent things in the church) are no longer indifferent matters if the accepting of them is combined with a violation of conscience or if they are to be judged as a yielding to a false theology. Another important side of his argumentation concerned Christian liberty. If the accepting of definite church customs is demanded under coercion, or if these customs are introduced as necessary for the salvation of man, it is no longer compatible with evangelical faith to yield in such matters. To the gospel belongs freedom, that is, evangelical liberty from the commandments of men. The only authority is the Word of God, of which the Apostle says that it "is not bound" (II Tim. 2:9). In this point Flacius was fighting for exactly that which Melanchthon himself had urged so clearly in his Apology of the Augsburg Confession: ". . . It is necessary to retain in the church the doctrine that the commandments of men are a useless worship."

The main argument of Flacius was summarized in the sentence: "In casu confessionis et scandali nihil est adiaphoron" — that is, in a situation where confession of the evangelical position is

required and where it would be obscured through yielding in external matters, or where the conscience of believers would be offended, indifferent things can no longer be held to be indifferent. This rule was valid for church policy not only in relation to religious authorities but also in relation to worldly powers. The relations between the evangelical churches and the political authorities came to be a problem many times in the years that followed. But the principles for correct response in moments of conflict had already been clarified in a most helpful way through Flacius' contribution to the Interim debate. His position was later confirmed by Article X of the Formula of Concord where freedom in questions concerning indifferent things is clearly stated, but also the responsibility not to yield to the enemy in such matters when the Evangelical Confession is threatened or when the weak in faith might be offended. There is no doubt that on this question Flacius and, after him the Formula of Concord, represented the stance that would have been Luther's, if he had been alive long enough to witness the Interim debate.

Concluding Remarks

In an ecumenical time such as ours, it is easy to remember and understand Melanchthon in his efforts to restore the unity of the church, to retain peace in society and in the religious arena, on the foundation of a common catholic faith. His contributions in this respect are really worth remembering. They seem capable of serving as a model and a point of departure for interconfessional discussions also in our day. But we have much to learn also from Melanchthon's mistake concerning the Interim regulations. In our time as well situations arise where a clear confession is required, also in matters that are indifferent in themselves. The Formula of Concord in Article X speaks about times of persecution. The pressure on the church, or on small groups in the church, may come from civil powers, from powerful people in the ecclesiastical sphere, and, not least, from the subtle but strong power that is called "the common opinion" or "the majority" ("Herr Omnes," as Luther called it). The Lutheran standpoint, as it was defined in opposition to Melanchthon and confirmed in the Formula of Concord, is an explication in clear terms, founded on deep experience, of how the freedom of the gospel can be and must be combined with firmness in one's confession of the true faith without yielding to the mighty power of the enemy. The difficulty of an adequate application of these principles remains as the task for the church in every new situation — and for every new

generation in the churches who share the same confession as the reformers and are still capable of receiving inspiration from them.

Footnotes

1. Clyde Leonard Manschreck, *Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 181.
2. Michael Reu, *The Augsburg Confession, A Collection of Sources with an Historical Introduction* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1930), p. 386 f., as quoted in Manschreck, p. 204.

In Response to Bengt Hägglund: The Importance of Epistemology for Luther's and Melanchthon's Theology

Wilbert H. Rosin

Dr. Hägglund has given us much to think about on a very basic topic for understanding the sixteenth century Reformation and for meaningful theological discussion today. In a few well chosen words he has provided a corrective in the debate over Melanchthon versus Luther. He is breaking with the nineteenth century theory that there was a fundamental antithesis and basic disagreement between Melanchthon's and Luther's theology. Dr. Hägglund states that Luther and Melanchthon were essentially in agreement, though they differed on some points, at least in their exposition of them. I believe that Dr. Hägglund is basically correct in his interpretation, though obviously he could not exhaust the issues in one essay.

That varying opinions about Melanchthon would develop is quite understandable, for scholars cannot empty themselves completely of their prejudices, emotions, and predispositions and cannot achieve *Voraussetzungslosigkeit.* Each person in the sixteenth century who knew anything about Luther and Melanchthon formed his own ideas about them, just as we today have our individual opinions of Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Hans Küng, or John Paul II. In their zeal for truth, the contemporaries of Melanchthon naturally feared that dire consequences would follow from any kind of compromise. Who was the real Melanchthon? The debate over that question was to intensify after both Luther and Melanchthon were gone.

A number of questions remain. Among them are these: (1) Why did the historians of the last century emphasize the differences rather than the similarities in Luther's and Melanchthon's theology? What does this mean for the theology of today in a practical way? (2) How did Luther and Melanchthon agree or differ on the matter of freedom of the will and predestination? (3) How clear was Melanchthon's thinking on the matter of adiaphora? (4) Did Melanchthon make a "fruitful mistake," as Dr. Hägglund puts it — a *felix culpa,* a fortunate error — in some matters of policy and in matters involving the state? (5) Why did Luther and Melanchthon condemn certain theological positions, and how does this play into the Lutheran stance towards ecumenism today? (6) Did Melanchthon's contemporaries really understand him? Do we understand him? Can we? How can we best get a more objective evaluation?[1]

Dr. Hägglund has devoted most of his essay to the period up to the Interim prior to the deep controversy that develops when the views and counter-views of the Melanchthonians or Philippists, the Crypto-Calvinists, and all the others become almost hopelessly entangled, especially after Melanchthon died in 1560 and before the Formula of Concord was completed in 1577. I shall not undertake to answer directly the questions just raised. Instead I want to speak about a key topic that impinges on all of these questions. To understand Luther as compared with Melanchthon, it will be helpful and perhaps necessary to know something about the philosophy of these two men, especially their epistemology — their view of how we come to know.

In dealing with the broader question as to whether Melanchthon was good or bad for the movement, the trend for the last century has been to say that Luther was existential — that is, he divorced theology and philosophy, faith and reason, *absolutely* — and that it was Melanchthon who was the villain, as it were, in reinstating Aristotle's authority in theology. For example, Richard R. Caemmerer in an article entitled "The Melanchthonian Blight," takes that position.[2] It is true that Luther, especially in the early years, declared Aristotle to be a pagan pig, the man who through the scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas, the great admirer of Aristotle, distorted all theology. Luther also took an anti-Aristotelian point of view on other matters.

However, we need to digress for a moment to understand first the debate in philosophy that was going on at the time. We need to know what is meant by "realism," "nominalism," and "moderate realism." Through the five senses we have a knowledge of material objects. This knowledge is specific and concrete. It is individualized. We speak of *this* particular mountain, *this* flower. But we can also think of a flower *as such* entirely apart from thinking of a particular, individual flower. So we have an abstract concept of flower or mountain — a universal idea of flower or mountain that can be applied to any number of flowers or mountains. But is this universal concept *real*? In late medieval scholasticism one group followed the Platonic realist point of view, namely, that the idea is the real thing, and the particular is just a shadow and represents an example of the eternal idea which is indestructible. A second school, the most prominent spokesman of which was William of Occam (who died in 1349), represents the nominalist point of view, contending that only the particular flower exists but not the concept of flower. One can see immediately that a consistent nominalist view would make it very difficult to hold such concepts as the Trinity or transubstantia-

tion in the Lord's Supper. In addition to the realists, who held that the idea is the only real thing, and the nominalists, who contended that only the particular (and not the abstract concept) exists, there were moderate realists, such as Aquinas, who followed Aristotle, the pupil of Plato. Aristotle said that the particular thing alone has real existence, but the human mind can abstract common elements from any number of individual things such as flowers or mountains so that one acquires a concept of flower or mountain as such, a universal concept as compared with the particular thing *(universalia in re).* To use a different example, it is possible to think of pinkness without having anything specific that is pink in mind. (Obviously, we are oversimplifying the three positions for the sake of discussion).

Now what does all this have to do with Luther and Melanchthon? We noted before that Luther is commonly said to be totally opposed to Aristotle. Luther was very much influenced by William of Occam, the nominalist. But when it came to epistemology, that is, how we come to know, Luther was not an extreme nominalist, but a moderate realist. In other words, Luther believed that one could have an abstract concept *and* also know the particular or individual thing. In that respect Luther was like Aristotle. In his later years Luther relented and came to say that Aristotle was a great philosopher, and the evidence shows that it was not just Melanchthon who reintroduced Artistotle. A well known book by Peter Petersen, *Geschichte der aristotelischen Philosophie im protestantischen Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1921), shows that Aristotle was never dead, but that his views dominated the philosophical faculties and the science faculties of the northern European universities all the way through to the early seventeenth century, when, thanks to Galileo and other scientists, Aristotle's comprehensive authority was broken. So far as theology is concerned, it was quite natural that Melanchthon should have reintroduced Aristotle's rules for good thinking and rhetoric. But what some analysts of Luther and Melanchthon forget is that Luther also was an ontologist. He was philosophically not an existentialist but held the concept of essence prior to existence and experience. He believed that reason tells us that there is a God; Luther did not rule out *all* use of reason, and to that extent Luther could also make room for an Aristotelian approach to the question of realism. He denied that reason could tell us that God is gracious, a burning cauldron of love — a truth which God revealed in Christ, despite the negative evidence of nature and history.

What made Luther so opposed to Aristotle in the early years

was the fact that most of the intellectual world of his day, including also the theologians, had been taken in by Aristotle's philosophy. The theologians had been influenced by men like Thomas Aquinas who overemphasized reason and argumentation and logic in matters of theology and faith. Thomas Aquinas, who is considered the most important theologian who applied Aristotle to theology, did not believe that one must put faith in one category and reason in another; he believed that the one can support the other. But he overemphasized the use of Aristotelian logic and reason in theology. Luther commented, "Thomas has been seduced by metaphysics. Therefore he is so loquacious." Luther based his theology in the Scriptures and held to what comes to man through revelation.[3]

It would interesting to explore some of the implications of nominalism and realism for the questions which Dr. Hägglund has raised. While the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper can never be described to the satisfaction of human reason, the moderate realism of Luther and Melanchthon made it somewhat more acceptable to speak of the ubiquity of Christ's body and at the same time of the Real Presence, a topic which Ralph Quere has discussed in a number of articles.[4] Likewise it was possible to speak of individual Christians, particular Christians, and at the same time use the concept of the universal church with all the implications for ecumenism. A moderate realist could speak, in one context, of the abstract concepts of state and authority and, in another context, speak of individual citizens and their responsibility.[5]

The controversy between nominalism and realism has significance for today. Realism stood for the old order; its trust was placed in authority, and the group was considered more important than the individual. Nominalism stood for the order which was to come in the modern age; it revolted against authority and state (the concept of state), and the individual was considered superior to the group. That point, in turn, could lead to discussion about the attitude toward authority today. Nominalism also stood for inductive science, just as realism favored deductive philosophy. Moderate realism, of course, would take in both the group and the individual, the nation and the individual, the concept of church and the individual Christian. Today the positivists and empiricists are the legitimate intellectual descendants of the nominalists. Their dominance represents the triumph of natural-science approaches to philosophy and epistemology. Philosophically, then, and specifically in terms of epistemology with its important implica-

tions for theology, Melanchthon and Luther were very close to each other.

The relationship between Melanchthon and Luther was always very subtle. They understood each other, and they complemented each other very well. Melanchthon was not a functional psychologist, but he was trying to be more precise in terms of human psychology. In terms of anthropology Melanchthon thought that man was more complicated. Melanchthon was trying to explain how the Christian accepts — what is involved in terms of his mind, his will.[6] Luther does not go into the matter on that level. He just said that the whole man — body, soul, and spirit — accepts and trusts. As a technical theologian Melanchthon had a somewhat more perceptive theological insight than Luther. For example, when Luther interpreted St. Augustine as a Paulinist, largely on the basis of his anti-Pelagian writings, Melanchthon perceived that Luther was himself a better Paulinist than was the Plantonically-tinged St. Augustine. Melanchthon was technically a careful theologian.

As we have observed, Luther was not philosophically an existentialist, as some contemporary theologians imply. The Finnish scholar, Lennart Pinomaa, in an early book emphasized the existential element in Luther's theology.[7] Luther stressed that every man must do his own believing, just as every man must do his own dying. The most important words in religion, he held, are the personal pronouns — "I," "thou," and "he, my brother." His, like Martin Buber's, was an I-thou theology. Luther's theology had an existential element, but his philosophical presuppositions were basically in line with a traditional ontological position. The existential element in Luther's theology has been emphasized by some contemporary theologians who speak of the *viva vox* (the living voice) of the Gospel and stress the *kerygma,* the one glad proclamation of the Gospel, and thereby do not take into account the whole counsel of God. Critics of Luther such as Joseph Lortz claim that Luther was *nicht voll hörend,* that he stressed only St. Paul's Gospel. But Luther produced straightforward commentaries on the four Gospels and on so many other books of the Bible that Lortz's assertion lacks credibility. But Lortz makes a valid point when he asks the question, "Did Luther think ontologically?" ("Hat Luther ontisch gedacht?"), and answers in the affirmative. Melanchthon, too, was a student and exegete of the whole of Scripture and no less than Luther emphasized the centrality of the *kerygma,* the evangelical proclamation.

Dr. Hägglund makes a good point when he observes that Luther was complimenting Melanchthon when he said that

Melanchthon spoke "softly and lightly." It is the kind of compliment that Luther pays to Melanchthon over and over again. Luther says, "Well I'm crude. I stomp on the chinaware, and Melanchthon knows how to handle these things and how to speak like a good Christian." Part of the difference between the two men was a difference of style.

There may be a temptation to look upon the discussion of Melanchthon's relation to Luther as no more than an esoteric topic for debate by impractical theologians who crave theological and intellectual stimulation, however unnecessary or useless that may be. But it is not just interesting to know whether or not Luther and Melanchthon agreed. We are really getting close here to the jugular vein of theological understanding. This matter has practical implications — for Lutheran doctrine itself, for the subject of ecumenism, for our view of church-state relations today, for understanding why there has been a strong anti-Melanchthonian bias throughout the past century. We are discovering that Melanchthon had a more positive influence on Luther throughout the years than scholars have appreciated in the past. Melanchthon contributed to Luther's ever increasing appreciation of the classics and humanist learning.[8] There is strong evidence that Luther's clear understanding of faith and justification with all its implications did not come suddenly in the *Turmerlebnis,* or even earlier, as some have said, but that it came as late as 1518, and that Melanchthon figured into Luther's understanding and later formulation of the doctrine of justification by faith.[9] It is therefore appropriate that pictures of Melanchthon and Luther should be placed side by side, as Dr. Hagglund observes. It is probably significant that both men are buried in the front part of the nave of the Castle Church in Wittenberg and that their statues are standing on the same level in front of the Rathaus in Wittenberg, as Helmar Junghans of the University of Leipzig shows in his *Wittenberg als Lutherstadt.* (1979) Luther, the outsized man, the rough-hewn, overtly forceful, courageous Reformer, surely deserves full recognition and credit. There also seems more than enough to discuss about Philipp Melanchthon, that mere wisp of a man with the unusually high forehead, one shoulder lower than the other, a frail body, a tendency to stammer, but a profound and brilliant mind, who, in the phrase of one biographer, Clyde Manschreck, through his "struggle with the ageless problem of reason and revelation" became the "quiet Reformer," "a finite man seeking to serve an infinite God."[10]

Footnotes

1. A number of other questions concerning Melanchthon's role in Reformation history are raised in Franz Hildebrandt, *Melanchthon: Alien or Ally?* (Cambridge: University Press, 1946).
2. *Concordia Theological Monthly,* XVIII (1947), pp. 321-338. A decade later this view was questioned in Clyde L. Manschreck, *Melanchthon, The Quiet Reformer* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 15.
3. Cf. Wilhelm Link, *Das Ringen um die Freiheit der Theologie von der Philosophie* (München: C. Kaiser, 1955).
4. Ralph W. Quere, "Melanchthon's Motifs in the Formula's Eucharistic Christology," in Lewis W. Spitz and Wenzel Lohff, eds., *Discord, Dialogue, and Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 58-73. Cf. also Ralph W. Quere. *Melanchthon's Christum Cognoscere, Christ's Efficacious Presence in the Eucharistic Theology of Melanchthon* (Nieuwkop: De Graff, 1977).
5. Cf., for example, Eike Wolgast, *Die wittenberger Theologie und die Politik der evangelischen Stände* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1977).
6. Cf. Erdmann Schott, *Fleisch und Geist nach Luther's Lehre unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Begriffs "totus homo"* (Leipzig, 1928). Also Erdmann Schott, "Luthers Anthropologie und seine Lehre von der manducatio oralis in wechselseitigen Beleuchtung," *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie,* IX (1932), pp. 585 ff. Concerning Luther's formula "Sunt duo toti homines et unus totus homo," Heinrich Bornkamm in *Luthers geistige Welt* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1953), p. 87, states: "Dieses Bild des totus homo, des Menschen der wir immer ganz sind, ist Luthers grundlegende anthropologische Intuition."
7. Cf. Lennart Pinomaa's more recent work, *Sieg des Glaubens, Grundlinien der Theologie Luthers* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1964).
8. For a stimulating discussion of Luther and the humanists cf. Lewis W. Spitz, "Headwaters of the Reformation," in Heiko A. Oberman, ed., *Luther and the Dawn of a New Era,* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), pp. 89-116. Cf. also Lewis W. Spitz, "The Course of German Humanism," in Heiko A. Oberman, editor, *Itinerarium Italicum. The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of Its European Transformations* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), pp. 371-436.
9. Cf. Wilhelm Maurer, "Motive der evangelischen Bekenntnisbildung bei Luther und Melanchthon," in Martin Greschat and J.F. G. Goeters, eds. *Reformation und Humanismus, Robert Stupperich zum 65. Geburtstag* (Witten: Luther Verlag, 1969), pp. 9-43, for an interesting contrast between Luther, who learned from the history of the early church that open confessional statements were necessary, and Melanchthon, who became a spokesman for Wittenberg theology.
10. Clyde Manschreck, *op. cit.,* pp. 18, 21.

In Response to Bengt Hägglund: Did Luther and Melanchthon Agree on the Real Presence?

David P. Scaer

I. *The Melanchthonian Problem for the Church*

This anniversary year of 1980 puts confessional Lutheran theology in an ambivalent position in commemorating the reformer Philipp Melanchthon. While some churches may have the pictures of Luther and Melanchthon side by side in stained-glass windows in chancels, others may feel compelled to have only Luther's and to keep empty the place reserved for the man who has justly earned the title of Praeceptor of Germany. In 1980 we are celebrating two years, 1530 and 1580. Whatever honor Melanchthon receives from our celebrating 1530 is mitigated in commemorating 1580. Melanchthon's Augsburg Confession will always be the Magna Carta of the Lutheran Church. Its brevity, clarity, and lack of provincial polemics have elevated it to the status of an "ecumenical" creed for Protestants. Even the Roman Catholics recognize its merit. Though its theology is Luther's, its form as well as content is also Melanchthon's. The Augsburg Confession is Melanchthon's document and remains a living tribute to him.[1] The adoption of the Formula of Concord in 1577 and subsequently of the Book of Concord in 1580 was at least partially a rebuke of Melanchthon or at least of positions claiming to represent Melanchthon. Melanchthon, "the quiet reformer," was also "the complex reformer," and the tradition which has grown up around him and his positions since his death bears this image of complexity and apparent contradiction.[2] He is theological patriarch for the two great and conflicting traditions of Protestantism, the Lutheran and the Reformed.[3]

The 1540 edition of the Augsburg Confession, known as the Variata, came to be understood as characteristic of Melanchthon's view of the Lord's Supper. The Variata states, "Concerning the Lord's Supper our churches teach that with bread and wine the body and blood are truly shown to those who eat in the Lord's Supper."[4] Several brief and familiar differences between this and the 1530 edition, as it is known, can be noted: (1). Bread and wine are now mentioned. (2.) Whereas the first edition stated that body and blood were present, the later edition states that they are offered with bread and wine. (3.) The condemnation of what was understood as the Reformed, or then Zwinglian, position is

lacking. Melanchthon's hesitancy to attach the Real Presence to the elements becomes evident.

II. *Luther and Melanchthon: The Differences*

The 1540 edition must have been different in some way from the 1530 version or at least more capable of being understood differently if Calvin and those mediating between the Lutherans and Reformed parties found it acceptable. Luther, on the other hand, must have been aware of this edition, but did not produce any formal strictures against it.[5] We are faced with several questions: Did Melanchthon change his position?; If he changed, when did he change?; Was Luther's position very different from Melanchthon's?; In what way did Luther's and Melanchthon's positions embrace each other?

Professor Hägglund alludes to this issue when he states, "He [Melanchthon] was convinced of the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, even if his explanation of the mode of presence was not quite the same as Luther's." In one sense the two Wittenberg reformers shared a common vocabulary but with different explanations. Some claim that the two reformers at first agreed and that Melanchthon around 1534 changed, pointing to the 1540 Variata as proof conclusive.[6] This observation is hard to refute.

A more recent scholar has attempted to find an internal consistency in the Melanchthonian view which can be traced from his early period right through his life.[7] What nearly all agree on is that Luther and Melanchthon did not in fact share the same perspective on the Lord's Supper though both were in some sense convinced of the Real Presence. For Luther, the presence was *in* the elements and for Melanchthon *in* the action *with* the elements. The real problem is whether their different views on the Real Presence are capable of mutual toleration or are inherently self-exclusive. Here there are historical, dogmatic, and exegetical problems.

First, a certain fundamental difference in approach to theology must be noted. Luther was by far the more strictly Bible-oriented theologian. In his debate with Zwingli he could insist upon the word "is." Melanchthon as a humanist was also a Christian antiquarian. He saw God's truth being given to Adam and being passed down into the present by successive generations. This meant that the truth of a doctrine could be demonstrated by whether or not it was held by the church fathers as well as being revealed to prophets and apostles. Heresies were condemned as revivals of former positions previously found unacceptable in the

church.[8] Both the Augsburg Confession and the Apology reflect this particular Melanchthonian trademark of obsession with the past history of the church. Real exegesis in the Augsburg Confession is somewhat limited, whereas citations from and references to the church fathers abound. Historical romanticism of this sort eventually results in all sorts of difficulties, since antiquity had no less internal conflict than the present. Conflicting events of the past may have been reflected in a certain internal conflict in Melanchthon. Melanchthon's function as "negotiator" of the Reformation period (i.e., his dealing with both the Reformed and Roman Catholic parties) may in part reflect a certain historical romanticism which was truly convinced that in the annals of the past lay hidden the one true position of the ancient church.[9] An internal and perhaps unrecognized frustration drove him to formulations and opinions which could embrace what would otherwise have been considered opposing points of view. From the very beginning Melanchthon set forth positions on the Lord's Supper which were faithful to church history, as he saw it, and nevertheless embrace the major competing opinions. Thus, it is not impossible to understand Article X in the Augsburg Confession in Roman, Lutheran, and Reformed senses.[10] A solution of deliberate ambiguity to the problem of the apparent differences in his position seems to be more satisfactory than attributing to Melanchthon an actual change in philosophical outlook.

III. *Melanchthon and the Lord's Supper*

Luther and Melanchthon's differences over the Lord's Supper surfaced in their sacramental piety. Luther could speak of teeth tearing away at the body of the Lord, he reluctantly surrendered the elevation since it was seen by some as an expression of the idea that the mass was the sacrifice for the living and the dead, and he could get down on his knees to drink the spilled sacramental wine as the blood of Christ. Melanchthon did not have the same attraction for the elements. He opposed the elevation as a false worship of God, a type of idolatry, and he was ultimately responsible for Luther's removal of the elevation.[11]

As Luther concentrated his sacramental theology on the elements, Melanchthon saw as primary the sacramental action.[12] Luther's key words were the "word" and the "element," the things (i.e., *res*). With Melanchthon the concentration is on the "word" and "ceremonies" (i.e., the *ritus* and *ceremoniae*). The sacrament for Melanchthon was viewed as *actio tota.*[12] Peter Fraenkel explains Melanchthon's position as functional, "i.e., the concentration on processes rather than things" and finds this theme

running through his entire thought.[13] "Efficacious presence" would also be adequate. Luther's view may be described as substantive, virtually materialistic.

The wording of the 1540 Variata with *exhibeatur* is generally recognized as characteristic of this functional, ceremonial, effective view of the Real Presence. *Exhibeatur* was used by Melanchthon as early as 1526 to describe the sacramental action.[15] Melanchthon is perfectly comfortable about speaking of the presence of Christ in the sacramental rite, but hardly in Luther's terms. It is revealing that Melanchthon sees the presence of God in the Ark of the Covenant as analogous to Christ's presence in the Supper.[16] The chief motivation in the Supper for Melanchthon is neither the activity of the worshipping congregation nor a spiritual presence, but a process in which God comes to the congregation. Modern process thought would be more comfortable with Melanchthon's formulas than with Luther's. The key word *exhibeatur,* again appears in the Apology of 1530-1531, the Wittenberg Concord 1534, and the infamous Variata of 1540. In the process of the sacramental action, Melanchthon attaches specific importance to the ceremonial eating *(manducatio ceremonialis)* (Fraenkel).[17] Melanchthon later did not teach Luther's *manducatio oralis* and *manducatio indignorum,* the doctrines that Christ's body and blood are eaten by the mouth and received by believers and unbelievers alike.[18]

The 1530 Latin version of the Augsburg Confession itself can be read in such a way as to allow for the functional, active, effective Real Presence theory which later Melanchthon more carefully articulated. The German version, not prepared by Melanchthon but by a group of theologians at Augsburg, is much more in the spirit of Luther and, unlike the Latin, incapable of the uniquely Melanchthonian interpretation.[19]

Melanchthon's position cannot simply be equated with Calvin's or a species of it, though certain similarities do exist. Both held that the sacrament nourishes the soul and is most important.[20] Melanchthon understood the Real Presence as a substantive touching or communication of the God-Man with the spiritual essence of the human being. This was not a communication of the Holy Spirit, but of the body and blood of Christ. The Redeemer, both bodily and in a glorified state, comes in the Lord's Supper to establish a transcendental contact with the Christian's spiritual essence. Melanchthon's view is nevertheless noticeably different from Luther's. The actual association of Christ with the bread and wine alone was considered magic for Melanchthon. He viewed the entire sacramental action as the

presence and the working of the entire Christ, but with stress on the deity.[21] With Luther, the concentration is on the sacramental elements themselves.

Herrlinger notes that for Luther the body of Christ is *in pane* and for Melanchthon *cum pane.* He also notes that the whole matter came up for practical, personal, and in part painful discussion between the two reformers. One problem for us is how it is that Luther was aware of the Melanchthonian aberration, tolerated it, and permitted it to influence ritualistic questions.[22] But the other problem is determining how Melanchthon was able to be true to himself in putting forth a doctrine of the Lord's Supper in terms that first Luther and then later Calvin could accept. Peter Fraenkel, the Melanchthon scholar, claims that Melanchthon's description of the procedure of others might apply to himself, "si generaux que chacun y puvait entrendre tout ce qu'il voulait."[23] Such ambiguity hardly could fit Luther. The differences between Luther and Melanchthon became and still remain a heritage of struggle bequeathed to the Lutheran Church.

Footnotes

1. Depending upon one's perspective the Augsburg Confession (AC) belongs to both Luther and the Lutheran Church on one side and Melanchthon on the other. In a letter of June 26, 1530, the day after the AC was presented, Melanchthon wrote Veit Theodor that he had set forth Luther's position, "juxta sententiam Lutheri." Quoted from Albert Herrlinger, *Die Theologie Melanchthons in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklungen* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1879), p. 135. As Melanchthon continued to publish new and revised editions, he undoubtedly saw it as representing his own and not Luther's theology.
2. The Philippists, the party favoring compromise with both Reformed and Roman Catholics on a variety of issues after Luther's death, took their name from Philipp Melanchthon. It is debatable whether every view held by the Philippists was actually his or whether their views simply shared in his generally mediating attitude. Michael Rogness in an abridgement of his dissertation exonerates Melanchthon of the Philippists' errors, but his arguments are unconvincing. *Melanchthon: Reformer Without Honor* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), pp. 122-39.
3. Such characteristic Reformed views as the sovereignty of God and predestination were not taught by Melanchthon, but similarities on the Lord's Supper are recognizable. As Herrlinger points out, both Melanchthon and Calvin held to the sacramental nourishment of the soul, *nutricatio animae,* apart from the bodily eating. *Op cit.,* p. 147. With good reason Clyde Manschreck calls him "Father of Ecumenicity" in *Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 229.
4. Translation made by the writer from *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Fourth Edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1959), p. 65.
5. Herrlinger offers the following observation about differences between the two reformers. "Die zwischen Luthers und Melanchthons

Abendsmahlslehre obwaltende Differenz: *cum pane vel in pane,* kam noch bei Luthers Lebzeiten zu praktischer und persönlich z. Th. peinlicher Erörterung, so jedoch, dass erhellt, wie Luther die melanchthonische Anschauung, obwohl er ihr Abweichendes erkannte, doch neben der seinen tolerirte, ja sogar in einer rituellen Frage dieser Anschauung Einfluss auf sich gestattete." *Op cit.,* p. 144. See note 22 below.

6. Clyde Manschreck sees a complete conversion for Melanchthon by 1535, but, as other scholars, sees the reformer buckling already in 1530 under Oecolampadius's influence. *Op. cit.,* pp. 233-241.
7. Peter Fraenkel, "Ten Questions Concerning Melanchthon, The Fathers and the Eucharist," in *Luther and Melanchthon in the History and Theology of the Reformation;* edited by Vilmos Vajta (Philadelphia; Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 163. Fraenkel sees the root of Melanchthon's attitude in his horror over doctrinal controversy about a matter so sacred as the Lord's Supper. This made him susceptible to the influence of the Reformed.
8. Fraenkel (*op. cit.* pp. 161-3) agrees on this. The matter should not be over-simplified as both Luther and Melanchthon used Scripture and the church fathers; but for Luther the Scriptures were an absolute guide and the church fathers evidence of that truth. Melanchthon was guided by the fathers as an essential part of the process of truth-seeking.
9. Fraenkel discusses Melanchthon's almost indiscriminating appreciation for the church fathers, which virtually equated what was old with the truth. Applicable was Tertullian's rule: "Primum est quod verum, secundarium vero quod falsum." *Op. cit.,* p. 160.
10. While there is little debate about the built-in ambiguity of the Variata of 1540, the same has not been noted about the 1530 edition. With no mention of bread and wine in the Latin version, the Roman Catholic party could easily read their view of transsubstantiation into Article X. Herrlinger points out that the particular Melanchthonian dislike for the *physica conjunctio* between the bread and the body is quite visible in the Latin text. Christ's body and blood are present and distributed, but only the German text states that they are received by those who eat the Lord's Supper. *Op. cit.,* p. 136. Manschreck sees Article X as being "near-Catholic" but fails to see it as capable of a Reformed interpretation (*op. cit.,* p. 24). The Latin version, however, *is* capable of a Reformed understanding.
11. Manschreck, *op. cit.,* p. 234. Herrlinger, *op. cit.,* p. 141. Manschreck credits Melanchthon with the abolition of the elevation in 1544. *Op. cit.,* p. 237. In 1543 he was already writing Philipp of Hesse, calling for its removal. Herrlinger, *op. cit.,* p. 145. Charges of "idolatry" have been levelled by the Reformed against the Roman Catholic position. The mere use of this term by Melanchthon in describing Luther's position is revealing. This statement by Melanchthon puts him in a position squarely opposed to Luther. "Haec Sacramentalis Praesentia est voluntaria; non est geometrica vel magica, qua Christus in pane manere." Quoted from Herrlinger, p. 143.
12. Klaus Haendler, *Wort und Glaube bei Melanchthon* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1968), p. 172. Haendler, in what seems to be the most exhaustive and scholarly study on Melanchthon in recent times, agrees with Fraenkel that this reformer concentrated not on the physical elements as did Luther but on the action. Manschreck is much more sympathetic than is Herrlinger to Melanchthon. About Luther Manschreck writes that the "physical presence of [Christ]. . . lasted beyond the ordinary use." Melanchthon, as opposed to Luther, could write, "God is not to be bound to bread and wine apart from the purpose for which the communion was instituted. It would be wrong to portray the union in a manner which at the words of consecration would

make Christ's body so united with bread as to be perpetually there. Only while the visible signs are being received is Christ present and effective." Cited from Manschreck, p. 242. During the convocation, at which this essay was presented, I was asked whether there was a similarity between Melanchthon's view and what is commonly understood as "receptionism," the view that Christ's body becomes present only in the actual eating by each recipient. My answer was then hesitant, but I am now thoroughly convinced that the concentration in both positions on the process was similar. Melanchthon soon gave up teaching the *manducatio oralis* (*op. cit.*, Herrlinger, p. 145), an essential ingredient in the receptionist view; but limiting the presence to the activity rather than to the elements is Melanchthon's and not Luther's view. Both Melanchthon and the "receptionists" focus the attention on the words "Take, eat" (Rogness, *op. cit.*, p. 132), while Luther focuses on "This is my body."

13. *Op. cit.*, 147-8.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-5.
15. During the discussion which followed the delivery of this response Dr. Robert Fischer of the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago correctly pointed out that the *exhibeo* should not be translated by the English words "exhibit" or "show," but "offer." He is correct and agrees with Fraenkel. "Thus *exhibere* is even here the technical term for the process of giving or offering and Melanchthon uses it when discussing the direction in which this process moves." *Ibid.*, p. 115.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
18. Herrlinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-6.
19. See note 10.
20. Herrlinger, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 143-4.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 144. Manschreck contains a lively discussion of the dispute between the two Wittenbergers with communication breaking down between them in 1543 and 1544. Melanchthon expected that Luther would devastatingly attack him in his *A Short Confession on the Holy Sacrament, Against the Fanatics* (1544). Neither he nor Bucer were mentioned. *Op. cit.*, p. 245.
23. I.e., "so general that every one could understand them how he liked." Original taken from Fraenkel, *op. cit.*, p. 163, as is the translation, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

In Response to Bengt Hägglund: Luther and Melanchthon in America

C. George Fry

It has always struck me as strangely appropriate that the Protestant Reformation and the discovery of America occurred simultaneously. When Martin Luther was nine, Christopher Columbus landed in the Bahamas; in 1519, while he debated Dr. John Eck at Leipzig, a fellow-subject of Emperor Charles V, Hernando Cortez, began the conquest of Mexico. Philip Melanchthon, the "Great Confessor," was composing the Augustana at about the time Francisco Pizarro was occupying the Inca Empire in Peru. By the time of Melanchthon's death in 1560, the Americas had been opened up to European settlement.

A related theme of equal interest is that of the American discovery of the Reformation. Or, more properly, the recovery by Lutherans in the United States of the history and theology of the Reformers.

How have the twins — Luther and Melanchthon — fared in the New World? (For they are twins; one cannot imagine the one without the other.) Their value, like that of gold, has fluctuated enormously! In part, that is because the Lutheran Churches in America have been of such varied backgrounds and have been subjected to a variety of foreign influences. But, more importantly, both Luther and Melanchthon are extremely complex personalities and comprehensive theologians. They are both capable of a great number of interpretations. Their religious richness is due to the nature of the faith they fostered; for classic Lutheranism, as Charles Porterfield Krauth noted, felt itself

> . . . Reformed, as against all corruptions; Protestant, as against the assertion of all false principles in Christian faith, life, and church government; Evangelical, as against legalism and rationalism, against all restricted atonement and arbitrary limitations of God's love; and through a historical necessity, created not by herself but by her enemies, she is Lutheran, over against all perversions, multilations, and misunderstandings of the Word under whatever name they may come, though that name be Reformed, Protestant, Evangelical, Catholic, or Christian.[1]

To be a Lutheran, Krauth contended, was to be truly Reformed, Protestant, Evangelical, Catholic, and Christian. To keep these complementary elements of the Lutheran heritage in harmony was not easy for the American interpreters of Luther and

Melanchthon. At times, as with Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the Pietist Patriarch, the Reformed influence predominated; later, with Frederick Henry Quitman, president of the New York Ministerium, the Protestant tendency prevailed, almost to the point of Unitarianism, as evidenced in his rationalist catechism; with Charles Porterfield Krauth the Catholic Tradition was pivotal, perhaps as an over-compensation for the Reformed and Protestant influences which he experienced in his youth. In the twentieth century, in the case of Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, the "Christian" or Disciple motif was central in the ecumenical quest for unity which took priority in Lutheran thinking. But perhaps it has been the representation of Luther and Melanchthon as Evangelicals that has been the most challenging and persisting problem for American Lutherans. The interpretation of these men as Reformers, or Protestants, or Catholics, or even as Ecumenical Churchmen, is not nearly as fraught with problems as their roles as the fathers, not only of Lutheranism, but of Evangelicalism. For that reason, let us consider Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon as they were understood in the early nineteenth century in English-language Lutheranism as pioneers of Evangelicalism.

Dr. Richard F. Lovelace, Professor of Church History at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, has recently written a major book on spirituality in Protestantism. It is entitled *Dynamics of Spiritual Life.*[2] In this work Lovelace contends that "the Evangelical movement has the deepest historical roots of any contemporary renewal movement" in America.[3] As a matter of fact, the origins of Evangelicalism go back not only to English Puritanism and German Pietism, in his opinion, but to the Continental Reformation itself as expounded by the Saxon and Swiss leaders. For that reason Luther and Melanchthon are regarded as the Patriarchs of American Evangelicalism. As "live orthodoxy," Evangelicalism, in opposition to "dead orthodoxy," or Confessionalism, supposedly bears the real mantel of the Reformation prophets. Lovelace is persuaded that this was the consensus of American Christians at the start of the last century. In America, between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, there was an "Evangelical Consensus" — a gathering of Protestants around the "Core Convictions" of the Reformation. This Evangelicalism was a protest against the Rationalism of the French Revolution and the growth of Roman Catholicism in America (through immigration). Lovelace believes that this Evangelical Consensus, which he regards as "the mainstream of American Protestantism," broke up into various "components" after the Civil War —

due to sectionalism (Northern and Southern churches), slavery and racialism (black and white churches), confessionalism (a return to "dead orthodoxy" by some Lutheran and Reformed groups), ritualism (the Anglo-Catholic movement in the Episcopal church, drawing that fellowship away from Evangelicalism), and theological controversies (with the rise of Liberalism and Fundamentalism). From 1865 until the 1960's, American Evangelicalism was divided — and became a minority movement in America. What he envisions in the present moment is a re-creation of the Evangelical Consensus, as Evangelicals rapidly resume their role as the "mainline expression of American Protestantism."

Whether this prophecy of Lovelace is valid, I do not know. His interpretation of history has merits. It certainly is true that English-speaking Lutherans in the nineteenth century did attempt to become part of a major Evangelical Consensus — a movement that dominated their conduct between 1820, with the forming of a General Synod (its constitution was ratified in 1821), and the deterioration of that body due to the rise of sectionalism (the secession of Southern members in 1863) and confessionalism (the creation of the General Council in 1867). The three leaders in the General Synod, who also shared a common evangelicalism with their Protestant neighbors, were Samuel Simon Schmucker, Benjamin Kurtz, and Samuel Sprecher.

Let us consider each and then review their program for Lutheran Evangelicalism (in opposition to Evangelical Lutheranism):

(1.) Samuel Simon Schmucker (1799-1873), the most famous Lutheran of his generation, was himself the son of a pastor. He received his education at the University of Pennsylvania and then Princeton Theological Seminary. While a student he had a vision of Lutheranism reborn after the dismal days of Rationalism and Deism through participation in two kinds of Evangelicalism — (a) the New Evangelicalism coming out of Europe in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, which stressed a return to the convictions of the Reformation and (b) the New Evangelicalism coming out of America in the wake of the Westward movement, the Revivalism that was sweeping both the Eastern seaboard (under men as Timothy Dwight at Yale) and the Trans-Appalachian West (in the Methodist, Baptist, and Disciples movements). As a pivotal figure in the new General Synod, as professor at Lutheranism's first seminary (Gettysburg) for over forty years, and as a prolific writer, Schmucker was in a position to advocate Lutheran Evangelicalism.

(2.) Benjamin Kurtz (1795-1865) was a very influential Lutheran. In 1820 he became president of the General Synod. He was also a member of the seminary committee, paving the way for the founding of Gettysburg. He was also active in getting the American Lutheran churches involved in missions. For years he was on the Board of Directors of Gettysburg Seminary and represented that agency and his denomination in Europe. But perhaps his most important role was an an editor — for he produced *The Lutheran Observer,* a very widely read organ. Kurtz was definitely of the Evangelical persuasion. Like Schmucker, he reacted strongly against the Deism that had so decimated mainline American Protestantism. For him the only alternative to an American church dominated by either Unitarianism[4] or Roman Catholicism[5] was a turn to Evangelicalism. To him Luther and Melanchthon were archetypal Evangelicals, sharing a similar situation, caught between the Humanism of Erasmus and the Romanism of the Pope. Kurtz, therefore, advocated Revivalism, or "American Lutheranism," or "New Measures," or "Melanchthonian Lutheranism," a Lutheran Evangelicalism that was radically ethical, experiential, and practical.

(3.) Samuel Sprecher, born in Maryland in 1810, was the third member of the triumvirate. Schmucker had been his teacher, and upon his graduation from Gettysburg Sprecher served as a pastor in Pennsylvania. From 1849 until 1884 he served as President of Wittenburg College (now University) in Ohio, an institution which he felt would present the real Luther and the real Melanchthon to the Great American West. But his greatest influence was not as a pastor or administrator, but as a teacher and author. *The Groundwork of a System of Evangelical Lutheran Theology* became one of the most influential statements of "American Lutheranism." Though it is said that at the time of his death in 1906, at the age of ninety-five, he had repudiated his earlier position, that did not undo its impact.

Schmucker, Kurtz, and Sprecher shared a common vision of a Lutheranism that was both thoroughly national (or cultural, or American) and yet totally original (in the sense of a new understanding of the European sources). Such a Lutheranism, they felt, would be not only part of American Evangelicalism, but could even become its nucleus. Such a Lutheranism would be confessional (not through a return to the Book of Concord, but through the composition of an American Confession), non-liturgical, and evangelistic. In this respect they were also profoundly ecumenical, regarding Lutheranism's destiny as that of uniting Evangelical Protestantism.

These men, I believe, were taken by surprise when with ease they overcame Unitarianism, Deism, and Rationalism, but were confronted by Lutheran Confessionalism. The contention of Rationalists such as Dr. Quitman, President of the New York Ministerium, that they really represented Luther never did ring quite true. But the appearance of Confessional Lutheranism in America in the 1840's was another matter. This Confessionalism in part was a survival from Colonial times; in part it was due to a revival of historical and systematical theology on the behalf of English-speaking Lutherans; in part it was the result of the Lutheran Awakening in Germany and the immigration to the United States of confessional groups that formed such synods as Buffalo, Missouri, Iowa, and Wisconsin. For this challege the Lutheran Evangelicals were not prepared.

What was the real issue at stake between the American and the Confessional Lutherans in the 1840's? The problem has been much beclouded, but certainly one of the roots of the controversy was that of historical interpretation — just how is one supposed to understand Luther and Melanchthon? Are they to be regarded basically as Evangelical or as Catholic? At least that is the way the Eastern English-language Lutherans began to perceive the question. To men such as Schmucker, Kurtz, and Sprecher, Confessionalism was a capitulation to Catholicism. They feared greatly. For what profit had they won, if having saved America from Deism and Unitarianism, now their own immigrant brothers brom Europe would surrender it to Romanism? Confessionalism, to the Old Lutherans, was a way to guarantee the balance of the Evangelical and Catholic ingredients in the Lutheran mix. To the New Lutherans, it was a calculated plot to subvert the Reformation and return Lutheranism to Rome.

Viewed from such a perspective, we can better understand a document circulated by Drs. Schmucker, Kurtz, and Sprecher. It was named the *Definite Synodical Platform.* Released in September 1855, it was mailed anonymously to the ministers of the General Synod. The thrust of this work was its effort to create an "American Recension of the Augsburg Confession." Here the line of direction becomes quite clear — the elimination of vestigal Catholicism from Lutheranism. Thus, the authors desired to eliminate all approbation of ceremonies of the Mass (and the term itself) in Article 24 of the Augustana; the teaching of baptismal regeneration in Article 2; the assertion in Article 8 of the validity of a sacrament in spite of the character of the officiant; and the teaching in Article 9 that grace is received through Baptism. The authors of the *Platform* advocated the total removal

of Article 11, with its retention of private confession, and the revision of Article 10 concerning the nature of Christ's presence in the Sacrament of the Altar. These alterations were not arbitrary, nor were they made at random; they were the product of a specific intention — the "protestantizing" of Lutheranism. Or, to put it another way, what Luther and Melanchthon did not complete in Germany in the sixteenth century, would be brought to fruition in America in the nineteenth. If the General Synod would adopt the *Definite Synodical Platform,* it would be quite clear that Lutheranism was "essential Evangelicalism."

As we know, this view of the Confessions and the Confessors did not commend itself to the mind of the Lutheran Church in the last century. Five synods of the General Synod — Hartwick, Southwestern Virginia, Alleghany, Miami, and Central Pennsylvania — refused the document, condemning errors in it. Fifteen other constituent synods either ignored or rejected the document. Three small synods — East Ohio, Wittenberg, and the Olive Branch Synod — adopted it. The response was, to Schmucker, Kurtz, and Sprecher, disappointing.

That is not entirely the end of the story. Under the leadership of Dr. Kurtz, a Melanchthonian Synod was organized in Maryland in 1857. The name indicates the contention of the triumvirate that they — not the Symbolists — really understood the Reformers. This Synod was constituted along the lines of Lutheran Evangelicalism. When it applied for admission to the General Synod, meeting in 1857 in Pittsburgh, there was heated debate. In spite of the opposition of English Confessionalists, the Melanchthonian Synod was allowed to join the General Synod.

The precedent was established, and a more severe test came with the Franckean Synod, a body founded in 1837 on a platform of abolitionism, revivalism, and doctrinal revisionism. Serious efforts to seat this Synod in the national organization often floundered on sectional issues. Southern Lutherans were not about to approve such a synod. With the secession of the Southern Synods to found their own church in 1863, that obstacle was removed. Now the issue was clear-cut. Would the General Synod accept the Franckeans — or would it reject them? The issue was that of confession. The meeting at York in May 1864 was a heated one with efforts at compromise, the final resolution being that the Franckeans could join if they would indicate the intention of ratifying the Augustana.

As we know in retrospect, this was the beginning of the end for both the General Synod and the American Lutheranism of

Schmucker, Kurtz, and Sprecher. Their victory was pyrrhic. In 1866 the General Synod was falling apart; in 1867 a confessional secession would occur, resulting in the General Council, so that, where once there had been one church-body, there were now three — a United Synod of the South, a General Council, and a small group continuing as the General Synod.

For the next century Lutheranism's concerns were directed elsewhere — and, if any challenge seemed to be a major one, it was that of theological Liberalism. As Lutheranism enters the 1980's, however, it appears that the key issue will again be what it was in the 1820's — the relationship of Lutheranism to Evangelicalism. It will be a challenge for Lutherans to keep the Catholic and Evangelical components in harmony, in a confessional synthesis that is also genuinely Reformed, Protestant, and Christian. Surely historical evaluation of the meaning of Luther and Melanchthon will continue to play a central function in this process.

Footnotes

1. Edmund Jacob Wolf, *The Lutherans in America* (New York: J.A. Hill and Company, 1889), p. 94.
2. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
4. This was the golden age of Unitarianism. Harvard, once a bastion of Puritanism, was now a center of Unitarian faith. We often forget how influential Unitarianism was in the early republic; it is instructive to count the number of Unitarian presidents in that era. The sister movement, Universalism, at times seemed on the threshhold of becoming a "folk-church" in the West.
5. Heavy Irish and German immigration, plus the acquisition of Spanish and Mexican lands in the Southwest, gave America, for the first time, a large Roman Catholic population.

Luther's Contribution to the Augsburg Confession

Eugene F. Klug

Why could Luther claim, "The Augsburg Confession is mine"? It was, after all, Melanchthon's scholarly, literary hand that had given final shape and form to this great document, one of history's noblest and most influential writings. Melanchthon's role is beyond dispute, of course. It was Luther, however, whose work and writings had supplied the doctrinal grist and content. All the evidence points this way, a proposition which is neither difficult to assert or demonstrate. The roots definitely run back into Luther's work during the previous dozen years before 1530.

But the mammoth size of Luther's production is enough to drive even the most daring soul away from the task of trying to uncover all the leads. The difficulty is not in uncovering this or that statement by Luther that connects up somehow with a given part of the Augsburg Confession, but of adequate coverage of all the sources out of which the various articles flowed.

Augsburg in many ways was simply the finest distillation in a very positive, objective way, of the totality of Luther's theological thought, the sum total of the Lutheran position in the Reformation. It expressed what the Lutheran confessors wanted the emperor and the world to know about their faith and their concern for purity of teaching, especially the precious Gospel drawn from the Word of God. For this stance there was precedent throughout Luther's work, voiced publicly in his treatises, sermons, letters, and classroom lecture.

The Schwabach, Marburg, and Torgau Articles

The point is that the subject is more complicated than merely citing the immediate documents that preceded the writing of the Augsburg Confession. Usually mentioned are the fifteen Marburg Articles in which Luther had a leading hand, with others (Melanchthon, Jonas, Brenz, Agricola, Osiander), composed at the colloquim of October 2-4, 1529, with the Zwingli party (Bullinger, Oecolampadius, Bucer, Hedio).[1] These theses, prompted especially by pressure from Philip of Hesse, were designed to stress the points of agreement between the two Protestant factions. In this they seemed to succeed fairly well, with the notable exception of the fifteenth article, on the Lord's Supper. In actual fact, however, it is erroneous to conclude that this was the only point of variance because of the attention given to that article.

There were other differences; and this fact becomes clear in the so-called Schwabach Articles, which Luther, along with his colleagues (chiefly Melanchthon), had prepared even earlier, during August of the summer of 1529 in preparation for a joint meeting of the Protestant princes and other leaders. They took their name from the place where they were first publicly released or made known. Undoubtedly Luther would have had a copy of them with him at the time of the Marburg Colloquy. At the prompting of the Lutheran princes they were presented at the Smalcald conclave of November 29, 1529, but met with little approval from the princes of the mediating, somewhat pro-Zwinglian side. Zwingli himself was not present.

The Schwabach Articles thus antedated the Marburg theses and were written by the Wittenberg theologians because they anticipated pressure from some of the Protestant princes, like Philip of Hesse, to compromise on articles of difference between the Lutheran and Zwinglian parties. Political considerations were thus of no small moment. Early in 1529 the Catholic side had succeeded in reversing the Diet of Speyer's ruling concerning *cuius regio eius religio,* which had granted a measure of toleration and religious freedom to the Protestants. The latter feared imperial pressure, and some stood for bolstering their union even if it meant compromise.

A comparison of the two sets of theses will demonstrate not only that the Schwabach Articles constituted the shape and frame of the Marburg Articles, but also that the former were somewhat more pointed in showing the differences existing between the Lutherans, on one side, and the Zwinglians and the sectarians, on the other. Luther, opposed, as always, to compromise at the expense of the truth, was chiefly responsible for their content.

Meanwhile, on January 21, 1530, came Emperor Charles V's summons of the Protestant princes to an imperial diet. The directive arrived at the Saxon court on March 11, 1530. Elector John Frederick immediately instructed his Wittenberg theologians to prepare a document that would explain the Lutheran stance on the controverted issues. The Torgau Articles were hurriedly composed for this purpose. Luther and company were to be at the Elector's residence by March 20 with said document in hand. Actually there was some delay; the Wittenburg theologians did not get on their way until April 3. At Torgau they met with the Elector and the theses were discussed.

The Elector's party, princely retinue, and theologians next proceeded to Coburg for a strategy session and rest that lasted from April 15 to 24. Thence they traveled on to Augsburg, arriving

May 2. For safe-keeping, and by the Elector's orders, Luther stayed in his "kingdom of the birds," as he called the Coburg castle, along with Veit Dietrich, his amanuensis.[2]

The Torgau Articles were directed against the abuses in the Roman system.[3] These articles clearly played a significant role in the shaping of the last part of the Augsburg Confession, Articles 22-28, which dealt with particular abuses. The Schwabach Articles, in turn, were significant for the articles with a pronouncedly doctrinal content, Articles 1-21. Altogether, when completed, the Augsburg Confession became famous for its positive, moderate tone. It is "defensive throughout," but "not aggressive," states Philip Schaff in a brief characterization of the whole Augsburg document.[4] In general one can agree with this assessment. Moreover, virtually every topic broached by the Schwabach and Torgau theses appears to be covered by the final document that was read on June 25, 1530, at Augsburg.

Luther at Coburg

Luther's voluminous correspondence during this time[5] is noteworthy. Very often historians refer only to his impatience evinced in letter after letter to Melanchthon and the other colleagues concerning their failure to keep him informed. Yet Luther was hardly at leisure, with nothing but letters to write, during this enforced "exile."[6] By April 29 he already had his *Exhortation to All Clergy Assembled at Augsburg* under way; he completed it by May 12. It was sent off to Wittenberg for printing, and by June 7 the five hundred copies that arrived in Augsburg were promptly sold out.[7]

The emperor, who had announced the convening of the Diet for April 8, finally arrived in mid-June. Immediately he sought to impress his imperial presence upon the gathered notables, forbidding any preaching by the evangelical side. To this order the Lutherans acceded on advice from Luther, who in a letter to Elector John Frederick (May 15, 1530), had reasoned that it was, after all, not a crucial issue and that "the city belongs to him"; so that the better part of wisdom in this case would be to "let force prevail over right."[8] When the issue, however, came to be a threat to their faith, then, true to Luther's example, the Lutheran princes demonstrated heroic resistance to any compromise of their consciences. They stood bolt upright and refused to bow or doff the hat to the papal legate, Cardinal Campeggio, as he blessed the crowd hailing the emperor's entrance into Augsburg. Charles V tried to force their participation in the Corpus Christi procession. Again they refused. To the order that they forbid the preaching of the Gospel by their theologians, Margrave George of

Brandenburg hurled back at the emperor this reply: "Before I would deny my God and His Gospel, I would rather kneel down here before Your Imperial Majesty and let you cut off my head."[9] In the end, however, the evangelical party abode by Luther's advice not to exacerbate the situation by insisting upon certain rights, including public preaching.

For Luther the key issue was "keeping your heart strong and reliant on His Word and faith," as he wrote in a very beautiful letter to his father, Hans, on February 15, 1530. Luther received word of his beloved parent's death on June 5. To Melanchthon he wrote that day, from the Coburg: "I am too sad to write more today, and it is only right to mourn such a father, who by the sweat of his brow made me what I am."[10] It was a statement typical of this dutiful servant of God. He knew the Fourth Commandment and he respected authority, wherever he saw it, at home or in the state. If there was one hand that steadied the tremulous Lutheran participants in the Augsburg Diet and kept them from rash decisions, it was Luther. At the same time he pressed a leader like Philip of Hesse to stand firm and avoid compromise on the meaning of the Lord's Supper, lest it throw the Lutheran cause into reverse gear.[11] On May 20, 1530, Luther wrote to his Elector, John Frederick, urging patience and firm strength in the midst of what must be "a tiresome situation."[12]

Indeed it must have been an often irksome situation; on the one hand, the theologians, led by Melanchthon, were forever changing the wording of the *Apologia,* as the Augsburg Confession at first was called; and, on the other hand, they all had to wait patiently for the emperor's arrival as he dallied in Italy and then in Innsbruck. Earlier, in another letter to his Elector (May 15), Luther had high praise for Melanchthon's work on the proposed confession as then worded. He stated: "I have read through Master Philip's *Apologia,* which pleases me very much; I know nothing to improve or change it."[13]

Clearly it represented the consensus which long before had been attained through the joint efforts of Luther and Melanchthon, most recently in the Torgau and Schwabach Articles — as well as all of Luther's theological expression in the years before, something which Melanchthon, better than any other, knew and respected very much. Only in matters of style and wording did Luther admit that it would be more "appropriate" for Melanchthon to do the final writing, as was the case at Augsburg, for "I cannot step so softly and quietly."[14] In part, this remark reflected Luther's sincere admiration for Melanchthon's literary bent and skill; in part, it probably also was a gentle gibe at Melanchthon's

perpetual worrying over wording, an endless fiddling with the text, and a persisting Erasmian streak which was always on the alert for a compromise posture or phrase. Justus Jonas, in fact, in a letter dated June 12, 1530, asked Luther that he keep the letters coming to Melanchthon because of the latter's continuing anxiety and the effect that this might have on the eventual outcome of the presentation before the emperor.[15] Luther knew his colleague only too well; his letters continued to flow, virtually daily; he prodded Melanchthon constantly to keep him informed, undoubtedly aware of the good psychological effect that would accrue if he could convince Melanchthon to get things off his chest by unloading his worries on his esteemed mentor and friend.

June 25, 1530

June 25, 1530, came and went, one of the greatest days in human history, when the Augsburg Confession was first publicly read before the emperor. He had asked for the Latin version, but at the solemn urging of Elector John Frederick permission was granted for the reading of the German version on the grounds that the diet was meeting on German soil. As a result of this concession both versions have equal standing. The German version, which was read by Dr. Christian Beyer, chancellor of Electoral Saxony, was then given to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz; the Latin copy was entrusted to the emperor and his advisers. Neither of these copies has survived. But the Lutherans had carefully seen to it that identical copies were kept.

There is no need to elaborate on the generally positive reception of the Augsburg Confession by the audience of some two hundred people in the hall; an eager crowd gathered outside, straining to hear Beyer intone each article.[16] Luther took note of this fact that the document made a good impression, according to the information he had received in reports from Augsburg; and he was also impressed with the courage of the evangelical princes who freely put their signatures to the document.[17] Melanchthon, on the other hand, greeted the next morning, June 26, with gloomy mien, and wrote to Luther that "we are in deepest trouble here and are forced to many tears."[18] He advocated further concessions and modifications.[19] Luther was understandably and mightily exasperated by his fretful colleague. In effect, he said, "Over my dead body!" On June 29, with a copy of the Augsburg Confession in hand, as it has been read at the diet, Luther wrote to Melanchthon in stern terms:

> I have received your *Apologia,* and I wonder what it is you want when you ask what and how much is to be conceded to the papists. For me personally more than enough has been

> conceded. Day and night I am occupied with this matter, considering it, turning it around, debating it, and searching the whole Scripture because of it; certainty grows continuously in me about this, our teaching, and I am more and more sure that now (God willing) I shall not permit anything further to be taken away from me, come what may.[20]

In the same letter, Luther, impressed with the princes' courage, summoned Melanchthon to come out from hiding behind Luther's mantle and make this cause his own personal battle:

> I don't like that you write in your letter that you have followed my authority in this cause. I don't wish to be, or be called, the originator of this cause for you people; even though this might be properly interpreted, yet I don't want this term. If this is not simultaneously and in the same way your cause, then I don't want it to be called mine and imposed upon you. If it is my cause alone, then I will handle it by myself.[21]

Luther and Melanchthon

Basically, as Luther discerned, the doubt in Melanchthon's mind stemmed from his uncertainty on the doctrine of the church, in this struggle against the monolithic papal organization. "If Christ is not with us," Luther asked in the same letter, "where, I earnestly wish to know, is He then in the whole world?" In fact, the issue could be put more pointedly still: "If we are not the church, or a part of the church, where is the church? Are the dukes of Bavaria [Eck's lord], Ferdinand [King of Bavaria and brother of Charles V], the Pope, the Turk, and those like them, the church?" Luther shoved Melanchthon's nose into the pages of Holy Writ, stating: "If we don't have God's Word, who are the people who have it?" Luther closed with the wish — almost a threat — that he might come personally to Augsburg in spite of the imperial ban, all because Melanchthon had become "so distressed and weak" under Satan's taunts.[22]

Luther assessed Melanchthon well, as also himself, when he wrote in a letter to his beloved colleague on June 30: "In my personal affairs I am less resolute in battle, while you are more stouthearted. In matters of the common weal you are the way I am in my personal affairs. You esteem yourself but lightly, yet in the common cause you are afraid. I, on the other hand, am of good and quiet courage in the common cause because I know with certainty that this cause is just and right, yes, that it is Christ's and God's cause, which need not blanch because of its sin, as a little saint like me must pale because of myself. Therefore, I am nothing but an unworried observer and do not fret in the least about

these menacing and threatening papists. Thus I beg you in the name of Christ not to despise those promises and consolations of God."[23] Melanchthon had simply forgotten Luther's eloquent message to the congregation of notables that had gathered at Coburg shortly before departing for Augsburg. There Luther had appealed to them to be ready for whatever cross or suffering God purposed to send their way. He stated:

> If you give yourself to Scripture, you will feel comfort and all your concerns will be better, which otherwise you cannot control by any act or means of your own.[24]

In that same sermon Luther pleaded that they all be ready to risk much more for the Word of God than "merchants, knights, papists, and such riffraff" dare to risk for the sake of "filthy lucre." This course of conduct should be evident to every faithful Christian, he says, "because He [God] will defend His Word simply because it is His Word."[25]

One might conclude that Luther was unfeeling towards Melanchthon and the pressures he was facing as leader of the Lutheran party. That was hardly the case. The very next day after he had excoriated Melanchthon, Luther admitted in a letter to Spalatin on June 30, that he had been a bit too "angry and full of fear" because of "Philip's worries."[26] After all, "we are to be men and not God," he said, and anxieties and afflictions are naturally quite human. Luther had nothing but praise for the Confession and for those who had bravely presented and defended it at Augsburg."Yesterday I carefully reread your whole *Apologia,* and I am tremendously pleased with it," wrote Luther in a letter to Melanchthon on July 3, 1530. In this same letter Luther reminded Melanchthon that it is sin to doubt God's support.[27] In a letter to Nicholas Hausmann on July 6, 1530, Luther spoke of the Augsburg Confession as "our confession (which Philip prepared)" and of how "one bishop stated in a private conversation: 'This is the pure truth, we cannot deny it.'"[28] "I am tremendously pleased to have lived to this moment when Christ, by his staunch confessors, has publicly been proclaimed in such a great assembly by means of this really most beautiful confession," said Luther in a letter to Conrad Cordatus on July 7, 1530.[29] To Justus Jonas on July 9, 1530, Luther wrote: "I only envy you this opportunity, for I could not be present at this, the beautiful confession . . Yet I am pleased and comforted that in the meantime this, my Vienna, has been defended by others." (Luther was referring to Vienna's successful warding off of the Turk in 1529).[30] "Do not hope for unity or concession," Luther advised in a letter to his several colleagues at Augsburg on July 15. The emperor's party would not grant any.

"Our case has been made, and beyond this you will not accomplish anything better." So, come "home! home!"[31]

But the haggling went on, not least over the division of power between the secular and ecclesiastical realms. On this point Luther wrote to Melanchthon (in full accord with what had been stated in the Augsburg Confession, especially Article XXVIII): "God's Word is the authority, and it commands that the two governments be preserved separate and unmixed."[32] In the meantime the papal theologians (Eck, *et al.*) scrambled to complete the confutation by Charles V's orders. It was miserably written and miserably supported from Scripture. Still it was being held threateningly over the heads of the Lutherans as an "official answer to the heretics." Luther, aware of the impact this pressure was bound to have, wrote to Elector John Frederick on August 26, 1530, with urgency: "Your Electoral Grace certainly knows that one of our principal tenets is that nothing is to be taught or done unless it is firmly based on God's Word." Thus, no concession could be made as regards "one kind" in the Sacrament of the Altar, for that was "a purely human invention, and was in no way confirmed by God's Word."[33] The same held true for the Mass as a sacrifice offered to God! In evident weariness Luther wrote September 8, 1530, to Katie, waiting patiently back in Wittenberg: "If only there will finally be an end to the diet. We have done and offered enough. The papists do not want to give a hair's breadth."[34]

On September 22, 1530, the emperor finally declared a recess, declaring that the Lutheran party had been given a fair hearing and that by April 15 of the next year (1531) they show cause why they should not be condemned in accordance with the so-called proof of their errors provided by the Confutation. The Elector of Saxony left with his party on the next day, September 23. Though they had not even been given a copy of the Confutation, Melanchthon and others had made ample notes, and had, moreover, obtained a copy through friendly sources in Nuernberg. Melanchthon's efforts to respond to this document led eventually to his Apology of the Augsburg Confession, in time for the April 15, 1531, deadline. It is now the companion document to the Augustana.

Luther's "Exhortation"

Luther's *Exhortation to All Clergy at Augsburg* has somewhat euphemistically been called Luther's "Augsburg Confession."[35] There is no doubt about its influence upon the Lutheran representatives. It was eagerly received, and still more eagerly read, as indicated above. It is tempered with genuine concern for "peace

and unity."[36] In a fatherly tone Luther urges less dependence upon human wisdom and clever maneuvers, and greater reliance upon God, who alone is truly wise. He defends the Lutheran side against the false charges of insidious and rebellious activities, like those of the sectarian and the *Schwaermer* spirits. Peace has been our goal, he asserts, along with the pure preaching of the Gospel, as God Himself commands in His Word. After clearly disproving the idea that the Lutherans could be dealt with as heretics, Luther cites in detail the abuses in Romanist teaching and practice that militate against the Gospel. First among these is the indulgence matter, a "shameful outrage and idolatry," in view of the fact that "the Gospel after all is the only true indulgence."[37] Once again he cites the gross distortions that came into the church as a result of the confession in the so-called Sacrament of Penance being used to control and minipulate souls. None values confession and absolution more than Luther, if it is left as the voluntary privilege of the sinner; but "that we should by our own works make satisfaction for sin, even against God," this, thunders Luther, "is the very worst and hell itself."[38] His criticism of the distortions of the Mass is equally as sharp; he rehearses the procedure by which God's sacramental gift to the communicants was turned into a sacrifice by men to God; and he wonders "that God could tolerate it so long."[39] Monkery has become so important in Romanist practice "that to become a monk is as good as to be baptized," Luther laments.[40] Ignorance of simple Biblical truth is so great that even the learned clergy do not really know the basics — the Decalog, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and their meaning. Luther thinks back to his ordination and exclaims in retrospect:

> My suffragan bishop, when he made me a priest and put the cup in my hand, spoke these very words, "Receive power to sacrifice for the living and the dead." That the earth did not then swallow us both was unjust and due to God's all too great patience![41]

The process of the excommunication of a manifest sinner, Luther further states, has been turned from its proper function of seeking to call the manifest sinner to repentance into a wanton, greedy mechanism for gaining a poor man's property.[42] Luther, in the *Exhortation,* again cities the Scriptural evidence against withholding the cup from the laity and forbidding the clergy to marry. As regards the latter, Luther challenges: "Now if it were true, as the dear canons blasphemously declare, that a pastor with a wife of his own cannot serve God, then this sixth commandment would really have to be repealed."[43] Luther does not oppose the idea of ecclesiastical machinery built on the bishops' administra-

tion of the church as such, but he reiterates a well-founded Scriptural principle that "there must be pastors, even if there were no longer bishops, canons, or monks."[44] Personally he has often found the demands of the pastoral office wearisome of the ingratitude of the people deplorable. He sighs: "I am so very tired of it."[45] But pastors for parishes there must be, by God's ordering of things. So, "if they do not want to be bishops in God's name [and provide pastors for the churches, in other words], let them be bathhouse keepers in the devil's name," he states in virtual exasperation over existing conditions in the church.[46]

In closing his *Exhortation* Luther drew up a list of some thirty points which closely parallel the articles treated by the Augsburg Confession, as also the Catechisms which had appeared in the previous year, 1529. Luther also sounded the cry for a proper hymnody for the people's worship. Luther's own "Ein Feste Burg" had appeared in that same year, 1529, in October. The last word added to the *Exhortation* was a reminder to the Catholic party, emperor and ecclesiastical prelate alike, that if force were to be used in the settlement of these religious issues, it would not be from the Lutheran side; and therefore it would be a burden which the consciences of the Romanists would have to bear.[47]

Luther — Primary Author

Philip Schaff is undoubtedly correct when he assesses the respective roles of Luther and Melanchthon in the production of the Augsburg Confession as follows:

> Luther thus produced the doctrinal matter of the Confession, while Melanchthon's scholarly and methodical mind freely reproduced and elaborated it into its final shape and form, and his gentle, peaceful, compromising spirit breathed into it a moderate, conservative tone. In other words, Luther was the primary, Melanchthon the secondary author, of the contents, and the sole author of the style and temper of the Confession.[48]

One may wish to debate whether such a clean division could actually be claimed between these two great spirits that loom behind the final product at Augsburg. Close examination of Luther's writings will demonstrate that much of the wording, if not the style, was as much his as Melanchthon's. Who, for example, will ever challenge the incredible excellence of Luther's Small Catechism, as to both content and phrasing? Time has proven this to be one of the most precious literary gems of all times from every point of view. The Large Catechism is not far behind, on both counts, content and phrasing. These books, in turn, have to be seen and assessed in the context of the works that

preceded them, straight from the mind and pen of Luther himself, like the rightly famous *Ten Sermons on the Catechism,* of 1528. In turn, these were the third in the series of catechism sermons preached that year! And the story of Luther's sermonizing on the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer traces back all the way to the time when he became *Hilfspastor* at the *Stadtkirche* in Wittenberg. Nor may his sermon books, the *Postillen,* so extremely rich in pastoral and theological application, be discounted — nor his very influential personal prayer-book of 1522. One need only read to be convinced.

Then, when it comes to tracing the source of utterances concerning the abuses in the church in matters like indulgences: confessional practices; the so-called sacrament of penance; the Roman Mass, which to Luther was the greatest monstrosity and abomination; monastic orders; enforced celibacy; and the mixing of ecclesiastical power and secular power; one need only read through the treatises, sermons, lecture notes, and letters of Luther to find that every single complaint voiced publicly in the document of Augsburg had seen the light of day previously in one of Luther's works. He so lived out of the content of God's Holy Word, the Sacred Scriptures, that in everything that pertained to faith and life Luther had brought into the proper and true focus. For example, there is nothing said in the Augsburg Confession concerning ecclesiastical authority in relation to the secular realm which had not first been duly treated in Luther's numerous treatises on the Christian, or the church, in society.[49]

Luther's "Great Confession"

When all has been considered, however, Luther's greatest single contribution to the final shape of the Augsburg Confession, both in content and phrasing, must be sought in the closing part, the third section, of his "Great Confession," or *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper,* of 1528. The document as a whole must rank as one of Luther's most profound theological pieces, side by side with the *De Servo Arbitrio* of 1525, written in answer to Erasmus. The "Great Confession" actually takes its name from its third section, in which Luther, item for item confesses his faith in simple, uncomplicated manner. In the first two parts his reasoning is highly polemical, often highly intricate, in defense of the real presence of Christ's true body and blood in the Lord's Supper. He thought of it as his final answer to the Sacramentarians, though it was destined to be followed by a number of others as the years rolled by. However, it remained his definitive effort on the subject.

At the same time, because he detected how closely a correct understanding of the Sacrament is interwoven with a correct view of the person and nature of Christ, the "Great Confession" is also one of the finest Christological pieces ever written. Little wonder that it is this document which is most often quoted, among all of Luther's works, by the framers of the Formula of Concord in 1577, especially in Articles VII and VIII on the Lord's Supper and Christ's person. Luther sensed how errors in doctrine tend to intersect, one with the other, as in the case of these two articles.

For that reason he felt the need, in the third and last part of his treatise, to make a brief summation of the articles of faith, because he saw how "schisms and errors are increasing proportionately with the passage of time."[50] This was his resolve:

> I desire with this treatise to confess my faith before God and all the world, point by point. I am determined to abide by it until my death and (so help me God!) in this faith to depart from this world and to appear before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ.[51]

By that time he had already on numerous occasions experienced the galling and distasteful effect of people putting things in his mouth which in no way represented his true feelings and convictions. Therefore, he felt it was now time for him to state the articles of faith, as taught in Scripture and as held in his heart. This was his preamble:

> Hence if any one shall say after my death, "If Luther were living now, he would teach and hold this or that article differently, for he did not consider it sufficiently," etc., let me say once and for all that by the grace of God I have most diligently traced all these articles through the Scriptures, have examined them again and again in the light thereof, and have wanted to defend all of them as certainly as I have now defended the sacrament of the altar. I am not drunk or irresponsible. I know what I am saying, and I well realize what this will mean for me before the Last Judgment at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.[52]

Since Luther alluded to his defense of the Lord's Supper, which covers some two hundred pages in the main body of the treatise, it would be interesting and pertinent to set his short statement of faith concerning the sacrament side by side with that which, by Melanchthon's hand, finally appeared in the Augsburg Confession:

Great Confession

In the same way I also say and confess that in the sacrament of the altar the true body and blood of Christ are orally eaten and drunk in the bread and wine, even if the priests who distribute them or those who receive them do not believe or otherwise misuse the sacrament. It does not rest on man's belief or unbelief but on the Word and ordinance of God — unless they first change God's Word and ordinance and misinterpret them, as the enemies of the sacrament do at the present time. They, indeed, have only bread and wine, for they do not also have the words and instituted ordinance of God but have perverted and changed it according to their own imagination.[53]

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X. Of the Lord's Supper they [the Lutheran Confessors] teach that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed to those who eat in the Supper of the Lord; and they reject those that teach otherwise.

XIII. Of the Use of the Sacraments they teach that the Sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them. Wherefore we must so use the Sacraments that faith be added to believe the promises which are offered and set forth through the Sacraments.

They therefore condemn those who teach that the Sacraments justify by the outward act, and who do not teach that, in the use of the Sacraments, faith which believes that sins are forgiven, is required.[54]

A comparison of these two statements will show evident similarities — also the obvious fact that the Confessors at Augsburg had to speak to the subject of the Lord's Supper with the Roman Catholic aberrations in mind, especially the *ex opere operato* theory of the sacrament; while in Luther's 1528 statement the concern is more for the Sacramentarians with their denial of the real presence of Christ's true body and blood. The brevity of Augustana X itself reminds one naturally of Luther's succinct, remarkably apt explanation of the nature and meaning of the Lord's Supper in the Small Catechism: "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us

Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself."

In similar way one can compare the statements on Christ's person:

Great Confession

I believe and know that Scripture teaches us that the second person in the Godhead, viz., the Son, alone became true man, conceived by the Holy Spirit without the co-operation of man, and was born of the pure, holy Virgin Mary as of a real natural mother, all of which St. Luke clearly describes and the prophets foretold; so that neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit became man, as certain heretics have taught.

Also that God the Son assumed not a body without a soul, as certain heretics have taught, but also the soul, i.e., full, complete humanity, and was born the promised true seed or child of Abraham and of David and the son of Mary by nature, in every way and form a true man, as I am myself and every other man, except that he came without sin, by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary alone.

And that this man became true God, as one eternal, indivisible person, of God and man, so that Mary the holy Virgin is a real, true mother not only of the man Christ, as the Nestorians teach, but also of the Son of God, as Luke says, "The child to be born of you will be called the Son of

Augsburg Confession

III. Also they teach that *the Word,* that is, *the Son of God,* did assume *the human nature* in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably conjoined in one Person, one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, that He might reconcile the Father unto us, and be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.

He also descended into hell, and truly rose again the third day; afterward He ascended into heaven that He might sit on the right hand of the Father, and forever reign and have dominion over all creatures, and sanctify them that believe in Him, by sending the Holy Ghost into their hearts, to rule, comfort, and quicken them, and to defend them against the devil and the power of sin.

The same Christ shall openly come again to judge the quick and the dead, etc., according to the Apostles' Creed.[56]

God," i.e., my Lord and the Lord of all, Jesus Christ, the only, true Son by nature of God and of Mary, true God and true man.

I believe also that this Son of God and of Mary, our Lord Jesus Christ, suffered for us poor sinners, was crucified, dead, and buried, in order that he might redeem us from sin, death, and the eternal wrath of God by His innocent blood; and that on the third day he arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty, Lord over all lords, King over all kings and over all creatures in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, over death and life, over sin and righteousness.[55]

Every article of the Augsburg Confession can in this way be traced to statements in Luther's "Great Confession," sometimes virtually identical in length, often very close in wording. The content is all there, if the phrasing is not identical. One would have to be wearing blinders not to see the similarities and the dependence of the later confession on the earlier. Of course, as already stated, this one document was not the only source. However, it may rightly be termed *one* of the most significant, if not *the* most significant, antecedent of the final draft of the Augsburg Confession.

Conclusion

Luther's famous *Table Talk* has not really come into its own until recent times, as scholars, like Heiko Obermann, and others, give it more and more credibility and weight. Moreover, it was not really until after Augsburg that these intimate tidbits began to be gathered. Veit Dietrich, who weathered the ordeal with Luther at Coburg during those wearisome months of the Diet in 1530, was one of the first to make notes of Luther's comments, sermons, etc. He noted a comparison, for example, which Luther drew between Melanchthon's work on the Confession and all other theological writings, stating that "Philip's *Apologia* is superior to all the

doctors of the church, even to Augustine himself, [and also] Hilary, Theophylact, and Ambrose."[57] That, to say the least, is quite an accolade. For Luther what happened at Augsburg was like a miracle. Sometime around the second anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, in June of 1532, Veit Dietrich recorded the following remarks of Luther:

> Our faith is an odd thing — that I should believe that that man who was hanged is the Son of God, although I have never seen him, known him, or met him. He is to be like a stone placed in the middle of the sea, a stone about which I know nothing except what the gospel says: I am the Lord. Well, then, if He says so, so be it! He has also demonstrated it at the diet in Augsburg, where the fury of all the kings and princes was arrayed against Him . . . Two whole years have now passed since one was compelled to say, "He is Christ!" And He will remain Christ a good deal longer. That great miracle at the diet is almost forgotten, as if it had never happened.[58]

Of course, this Luther never believed, that it would ever actually be forgotten. To him what God had accomplished there was "truly the last trump before the day of judgment."[59] God's Word had done it! The emperor and the pope "wanted to extinguish it, but the blaze grew and spread."[60] So it did, indeed. And it was to the Augustana that the Confessors in 1577-1580 turned in defense of their faith. We can state our need in no better, nor stronger, nor truer words:

> Herewith we again whole-heartedly subscribe this Christian and thoroughly Scriptural Augsburg Confession, and we abide by the plain, clear, and pure meaning of its words. We consider this Confession a genuinely Christian symbol which all true Christians ought to accept next to the Word of God . . . Similarly we are determined by the grace of the Almighty to abide until our end by this repeatedly cited Christian Confession as it was delivered to Emperor Charles in 1530. And we do not intend, either in this or in subsequent doctrinal statements, to depart from the aforementioned Confession or to set up a different and new confession.[61]

Footnotes

1. Martin Luther, *Sämmtliche Schriften,* ed. Johann Georg Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1901), 17, pp. 1138 f., Henry Eyster Jacobs, *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board, 1912), pp. 69 ff.
2. The "winged jackdaws," or blackbirds, were both amusement and distraction to him while sequestered in safe-keeping, because of the imperial ban, at Coburg Castle. Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds., *Luther's Works* (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House and

Fortess Press, 1955-1972), 49, pp. 287-295, for letters written to Melanchthon and Spalatin on April 24, 1530.
3. For an English translation see H. E. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-98.
4. Philip Schaff, ed., *Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1899), I, pp. 233 f.
5. He was at Coburg until October 13.
6. Notable among Luther's productions during these months were his expositions of certain Psalms, especially his beautiful Commentary on Psalm 118, his favorite; translations of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets; and his treatise *On the Keys;* yet he complains that his time at Coburg was "a waste."
7. Cf. the letter from Justus Jonas to Luther, June 13, 1530. *St. L.* 21a, 1477.
8. *LW* 49, 298.
9. Carolus Gottlieb Bretschneider, ed., *Corpus Reformatorum* (Halis: A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1835), II, p. 115. Also quoted in E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 725. Margrave George's retort so shocked the emperor, in turn, that he exclaimed in his halting German, "Not cut off head! Not cut off head!"
10. Margaret A. Currie, tr., *Letters of Martin Luther* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1908), p. 217.
11. *LW* 49, 299. Letter of May 20, 1530.
12. *LW* 49, 306.
13. *LW* 49, 297.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *St. L.* 21a, 1471.
16. In a letter to Luther, June 27, 1530, Justus Jonas reported that Charles V appeared to be very gracious, interested, and friendly at the time of the reading, that he listened attentively, and that several of the Catholic leaders nodded their approval; another report, however, speaks of the emperor nodding in slumber for a time — little wonder in a two-hour ordeal! *St. L.* 16, 883 f.
17. *St. L.* 16, 882.
18. *St. L.* 16, 896.
19. See also his letter of June 26 to Camerarius, *St. L.* 16, 897.
20. *LW* 49, 328.
21. *Ibid.,* 330.
22. *Ibid.,* 331 f.
23. *St. L.* 16, 906, Comparing their different temperaments Luther states of Melanchthon in his *Table Talk:* "Out of love Philip wants to be of service to everybody. If the papists came to me this way, I'd send them packing . . . Philip lets himself be devoured. I devour everything and spare no one. So God accomplishes the same thing in two different persons." *LW* 54, 355.
24. *LW* 51, 204.
25. *LW* 51, 205.
26. *LW* 49, 336.
27. *LW* 49, 343.
28. *LW* 49, 348 ff.
29. *LW* 49, 354.
30. *LW* 49, 368 f.
31. *LW* 49, 377.
32. *LW* 49, 383.
33. *LW* 49, 407
34. *LW* 49, 416 f.
35. Cf. the editor's introduction to the treatise, *LW* 34, 7.

36. *Ibid.*, 10.
37. *Ibid.*, 16.
38. *Ibid.*, 19.
39. *Ibid.*, 22 ff. Luther later in his *Table Talk*, sometime in early 1532, comments concerning the Mass as sacrifice: "At the diet [Augsburg] the papists tried to frighten and threaten us. They wished us to agree that the mass is a sacrifice of praise merely to provide themselves with a subterfuge in the term 'sacrifice,' I'm ready to concede to them that the mass is a sacrifice of praise, provided they on their part concede that it's not only the priest at the altar but every communicant who sacrifices." *LW* 54, 139.
40. *Ibid.*, 28.
41. *Ibid.*, 30.
42. *Ibid.*, 33.
43. *Ibid.*, 42.
44. *Ibid.*, 44.
45. *Ibid.*, 50.
46. *Ibid.*, 52.
47. *Ibid.*, 60 f.
48. *Op. cit.*, 229.
49. A partial list here would include *Against Insurrection and Rebellion*, 1522; *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*, 1523; *Admonition to Peace*, 1525, *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*, 1525; *An Open Letter on the Harsh Book Against the Peasants*, 1525; *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*, 1526; *On War Against the Turk*, 1529; Commentary on Psalm 82, 1530, produced while Luther was at the Coburg. To this list would have to be added those equally significant works which Luther produced on marriage, economics, education, and other matters relevant to the Christian citizen's daily life in the sixteenth century.
50. *LW* 37, 360.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*
53. *LW* 37, 367.
54. AC X and XIII; *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), pp. 47, 49. All references to the Lutheran Confessions are from this edition, unless otherwise noted.
55. *LW* 37, 362.
56. AC III; *Triglotta*, p. 45.
57. *LW* 54, 34.
58. *LW* 54, 39 f.
59. *LW* 54, 186.
60. *Ibid.*
61. FC Preface 4-5; Theodore G. Tappert, tr. and ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 502.

Fanaticism as a Theological Category in the Lutheran Confessions

Paul L. Maier

In view of the widespread activity of various "Spirit" movements in contemporary Christianity, a topic such as this seems more than timely. By "fanaticism as a confessional category" *Schwärmerei* is intended, of course, but apparently this familiar term was deemed too informal for use in the Confessions, and it does not appear.[1] Instead, the adjective "fanatical" is employed in the Apology to describe the views of the Anabaptists ("contra impias et fanaticas opiniones Anabaptistarum"; IX, 53), as well as other "fanatical spirits" ("fanatici spiritus"; XXI, 43). Alternative names for such people include *Rottengeister* ("rabble-spirits"), *sectarii* (Smalcald Articles, III, 3), and especially *Enthusiastae* (III, 8, *et passim).* Both Luther and the formulators of the Book of Concord, however, tended to make the enthusiast category even more elastic and comprehensive than was perhaps useful. Luther could easily daub as *Schwärmer* not merely such obvious sorts as the Zwickau prophets, Müntzer, Carlstadt, or the Anabaptists, but, later on, even such Sacramentarians as Zwingli — in effect, nearly any of the Protestants outside the Lutheran Reformation. Similarly, the Formula of Concord uses the term "fanatics" even for such Swiss reformers as Theodore Beza (Solid Declaration, VII, 67).

This essay, however, will not incorporate so broad a definition. Instead, "fanaticism" or "enthusiasm" will be limited strictly to the Formula of Concord's own brilliantly concise definition: "Enthusiasts we call those who expect the heavenly illumination of the Spirit ["coelestes revelationes" = "celestial revelations"] without the preaching of God's Word" (Epitome, II, 13).

Historical Background

A brief survey of the historical roots of sixteenth-century enthusiasm is most necessary to an understanding of the Lutheran encounter with it. Both critical minds and critical times helped set the stage for the "Spirit" movements in the Reformation Era. The minds included those of the late Medieval mystics, like Meister Eckhardt, John Tauler, and others, who, in pressing for direct contact, if not "union," with God, blazed the theological trail which could bypass both priests and sacraments in an interior spirituality. The implications of this flight from externals were helpful in preparing an antihierarchical climate which assisted the later Reformation. But the mystics would also be

hailed as spiritual forbears by the enthusiasts who would challenge the Lutheran Reformation.

Even more important, however, were the *times.* The tumultuous political changes attending the early sixteenth century are familiar enough from the opening chapters of any text on the Reformation Era and need not be discussed here. But when this unrest was coupled with the realization that exactly one millenium and a half had elasped since the birth of Christ, the Hal Lindseys of that day were already vociferously at work, making apocalyptic predictions of the end, much as today — in approaching the bimillenial milestone — similar prognostications are heard. With Christ's imminent return expected, how did Christians behave? The stolid, unflappable Luthers, of course, merely planted their apple trees, while the more skittish Melanchthons hauled out their astrology charts. But commoners, peasants, sensitive sorts, marginal minds, theological and religious upheavals — were obvious tinder for the enthusiasts and their message. And a history of "Spirit" movements shows a very convincing pattern, namely, that times of extreme crisis and stress have always proven fertile breeding grounds for enthusiasm and such manifestations as glossolalia, particularly when the societal upheavals are also associated with suspected "end times."

Against this background, that Luther and the reformers should have had problems with enthusiasts was quite predictable, especially also in view of Wittenberg's own successful challenge to Rome, which "opened the floodgates for private and new interpretations of Christianity," as the papists claimed and some of the enthusiasts echoed. It was late in 1521, while Luther was in hiding as Junker Georg at the Wartburg, that the three Zwickau Prophets made their debut in Wittenburg. On intimate terms with the Almighty, they jettisoned the Bible and relied instead on the "Spirit." Infant baptism was false, they insisted, and it was time for a millenial erection of the kingdom of God on earth through the slaughter of the ungodly. So the "Spirit" told them. It was Wittenberg's first brush with this sort of pure enthusiasm. Zwilling and Carlstadt, of course, were already hard at work in their iconoclastic crusade, but this was hardly done on the basis of such *direct pipeline* information from God, as the Zwickau prophets boasted. Melanchthon almost played Tertullian to their Montanus. He was very nearly taken in by them, his jaw sagging open and wondering if indeed the age of prophecy was *not* past. "I can hardly tell you how deeply I am moved," he wrote to Elector Frederick the Wise, and he meant this in a positive sense. Fortunately, his wits had not forsaken him entirely, for he added,

"We must beware lest we resist the Spirit of God . . . but also lest we be possessed of the devil." Luther would have to decide. And, sight unseen, and merely from Melanchthon's letters, the great Reformer drew the accurate conclusion that they must be false prophets: "When these men speak of sweetness and of being transported to the third heaven, do not believe them. Divine majesty does not speak directly to men."

But this and the other Wittenberg disorders in Luther's absence necessitated his famous return from the Wartburg. Effectively, it was the beginning of the second front, the battle he had to wage for the rest of his life against the left wing of the Reformation, the radical approach which set the Spirit in opposition to Scripture or any other external means or aid, ranging from the Lord's Supper and Baptism to music, art, and stained glass. The Spirit needed none of this, the enthusiasts insisted. They would now be led directly by God as Spirit-filled individuals, whether clergy or laity, to restore the primitive Christian church.

As if Zwickau had not done enough by bestowing its "Heavenly Prophets" on the Reformation Era, it now also launched Thomas Müntzer. While the "prophets" had rejected only infant baptism, Müntzer did away with the sacrament altogether, and the Bible too, for that matter, unless interpreted by the new Elijah of that era — himself. The motto for him as for so many enthusiasts was a misinterpreted II Corinthians 3:6: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life." All externals had tertiary signifiance for him, since the internal experience of the Spirit was primary and normative, and the Spirit's instructions called for the new kingdom of saints on earth — through slaughter of the ungodly, if necessary. This viewpoint was, of course, repugnant to Luther and his associates not only because of the sheer subjectivism in Müntzer's claims (deniable even if "he had swallowed the Holy Ghost, feathers and all," as Luther put it), but also because of Müntzer's devastating application of this total enthusiasm at Alstedt, Mülhausen, and elsewhere. While Müntzer fell at Frankenhausen, his spirit would live on with the Anabaptist uprising at Münster in 1534, where another direct "revelation" from God told the saints to establish their New Jerusalem — with all its attendant bloodshed.

Not that all Anabaptists or, indeed, all enthusiasts or "spiritualists" were so bloody. A pleasant exception was the mild-mannered Christian gentleman named Caspar Schwenckfeld, the least radical theologian of the Radical Reformation, the furthest right of the left wing, the least enthusiastic of the enthusiasts. But his theology, too, posited a basic dualism between Word and

Spirit which diminished the importance of all externals, including church worship and the sacraments. And even though his works are studded with Scripture references, his claim for additional *direct revelation* placed him squarely among the enthusiasts, so far as Luther was concerned, and occasioned the Reformer's famous misspellings of his name as "Schweinsfeld," "Blindfeld," or "Stenkfeld."

From purely psychological considerations, the great wonder of it all is that Martin Luther himself never claimed special revelations of any kind. I say "wonder," because Luther seems to have had more than enough bouts with the devil, even to the point of conversing with him at bedtime. If such negative "revelation," why not an — at least imagined — positive counterpart? At many times in his life, he could have used a positive, personal encouragement from the Spirit in the manner of Paul's experience in Corinth. But from his monastery days on, whenever he was advised to seek such inner communion or cast about for such direct revelation, he found only utter darkness. And thank God for that! Because this situation prevented a hopeless subjectivization of the faith. Instead, it drove Luther back to *historic* revelation rather than an imagined contemporary counterpart, to the *objective, hard* evidence of the word. Scripture was all the revelation he would ever need — hence the quintessential objection of Luther and the other Lutheran reformers to enthusiasm. As Bainton has well observed, the menance of the enthusiasts, for Luther, was that they "destroyed the uniqueness of Christian revelation in the past by elevation of revelation in the present."[2]

Confessional Strictures Against Enthusiasm

Already in the Augsburg Confession, and early on in that document in Article V, "Of the Ministry," comes one of the first condemnations:

> They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparation and works.

In the Large Cathechism, Luther shows the results of such Wordless spirituality in his discussion of the Second Commandment:

> But the greatest abuse [of the Second Commandment] occurs in spiritual matters, which pertain to the conscience, when false preachers rise up and offer their lying vanities as God's word.[3]

One of the *negativa* in the Formula of Concord is most succinct in this connection:

> Also, we reject and condemn the error of the Enthusiasts ["ancient and modern Enthusiasts" in SD, II, 4], who

imagine that God without means, without the hearing of God's Word, also without the use of the holy Sacraments, draws men to Himself, and enlightens, justifies, and saves them. (Enthusiasts we call those who expect the heavenly illumination of the Spirit without the preaching of God's Word.)[4]

But the *locus classicus,* in this respect, would be Luther's own words in the Smalcald Articles. With what clever breadth Luther applies the term "enthusiasts" to include Adam, Eve, the Pope, and even Mohammed:

> And in those things which concern the spoken, outward Word, we must firmly hold that God grants His Spirit or grace to no one, except through or with the preceding outward Word, in order that we may [thus] be protected against the enthusiasts, i.e., spirits who boast that they have the Spirit without and before the Word, and accordingly judge Scripture or the spoken Word, and explain and stretch it at their pleasure, as Muenzer did, and many still do at the present day, who wish to be acute judges between the Spirit and the letter, and yet know not what they say or declare. For [indeed] the Papacy also is nothing but sheer enthusiasm, by which the Pope boasts that all rights exist in the shrine of his heart, and whatever he decides and commands with [in] his church is spirit and right, even though it is above and contrary to Scripture and the spoken Word.
>
> All this is the old devil and old serpent, who also converted Adam and Eve into enthusiasts, and led them from the outward Word of God to spiritualizing and self-conceit, and nevertheless he accomplished this through other outward words. Just as also our enthusiasts [at the present day] condemn the outward Word, and nevertheless they themselves are not silent, but they fill the world with their pratings and writings as though, indeed, the Spirit could not come through the writings and spoken word of the apostles, but [first] through their writings and words he must come. Why [then] do not they also omit their own sermons and writings, until the Spirit Himself comes to men, without their writings and before them, as they boast that He has come into them without the preaching of the Scriptures? But of these matters there is not time to dispute at greater length; we have elsewhere sufficiently urged this subject.
>
> For even those who believe before Baptism, or become believing in Baptism, believe through the preceding outward Word, as the adults, who have come to reason, must first

have heard: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, even though they are at first unbelieving, and receive the Spirit and Baptism ten years afterwards. Cornelius, Acts 10, 1 ff., had heard long before among the Jews of the coming Messiah, through whom he was righteous before God, and in such faith his prayers and alms were acceptable to God (as Luke calls him devout and God-fearing), and without such preceding Word and hearing could not have believed or been righteous . . .

In a word, enthusiasm inheres in Adam and his children from the beginning [from the first fall] to the end of the world, [its poison] having been implanted and infused into them by the old dragon, and is the origin, power [life], and strength of all heresy, especially of that of the Papacy and Mahomet. Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments. For God wished to appear even to Moses through the burning bush and spoken Word; and no prophet, neither Elijah nor Elisha, received the Spirit without the Ten Commandments [or spoken Word]. Neither was John the Baptist conceived without the preceding word of Gabriel, nor did he leap in his mother's womb without the voice of Mary. And Peter says, 2 Ep. 1, 21: The prophecy came not by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Without the outward Word, however, they were not holy, much less would the Holy Ghost have moved them to speak when they still were unholy [or profane]; for they were holy, says he, since the Holy Ghost spake through them.[5]

Confessional Affirmations

We can, indeed, rejoice — in this quadricentennial of the Book of Concord — that the Lutheran Confessions have so clear and sensible — and Scriptural — an approach to the problem of how divine revelation is identified, received, guaranteed, and appropriated, and where the Spirit can truly be found or finds us. In the final analysis, the enthusiast had — and has — only his *private* impressions, projections, imaginings, or whatever, as evidences of claimed divine revelation or the work of the Spirit. These claims, *totally subjective* in nature, cannot be tested by any external means, unless, of course, they run clearly contrary to Scripture, at which point they may at least be proven false. The Confessions, on the other hand, anchoring the work of the Spirit to the means of

grace — Word and Sacrament — present a *clear, objective* forum for the Spirit's activity to which all Christians can confidently relate. The famous cry, "The Holy Spirit needs no *vehiculum,*" may indeed be true from the *divine* perspective in the sense that God requires nothing else than Himself. The point of the Lutheran confessions, however, is that while the Spirit may not need a *vehiclum,* human beings evidently do in the sense that their internal experience of the Spirit's work must be occasioned by the external channels of divine grace. We do have the handicap of being quite an external sort of being.

Following, then, are some of the prime confessional affirmations on this theme, beginning with a very familiar phrase from the Small Catechism:

> . . . I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. [That is another way of saying, "Climbing the mystic ladder for special theophanies and revelations is a dubious enterprise, at best!"] But the Holy Ghost has called me *by the Gospel,* enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith . . . .[6]

The phrase, "by the Gospel," of course, is determinative. The Word — not the vagaries of human experience or sensation — is the guarantee of divine revelation and all subsequent activity of the Spirit. We note that emphasis in the fuller explanation of the Third Article in the Large Catechism. "Durch das Wort," "per Verbum" ("through the Word"), becomes almost a refrain:

> This, now, is the article which must ever be and remain in operation. For creation we have received; redemption, too, is finished. But the Holy Ghost carries on His work without ceasing to the last day. And for that reason He has appointed a congregation upon earth by which He speaks and does everything . . . Therefore we believe in Him who *through the Word* daily brings us into the fellowship of this Christian church, and *through the same Word* and the forgiveness of sins bestows, increases and strengthens faith, in order that when He has accomplished it all, and we abide therein, and die to the world and to all evil, He may finally make us perfectly and forever holy; which now we expect in faith *through the Word.*[7]

So powerful is the Word, in the Lutheran Confessions, that it actually effectuates the sacraments themselves, or makes the sacraments sacraments. Take Baptism, for example:

> . . . If the Word is separated from it [the water], the water is

> the same as that with which the servant cooks, and may indeed be called a bather's baptism.[8]

Luther had a strong appreciation for the fact that any inner spiritual experience must arrive through the quite *external* threshhold of *sense experience.* He would have sympathized with John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and the *tabula rasa* school, not with Descartes and the Continental rationalists of the Enlightenment. Accordingly, the church need not wonder that God *does* resort to external means to contact us:

> ... Now, they [enthusiasts, *et al.*] are so mad as to separate faith and that to which faith clings and is bound, though it be something external. Yea, it shall and *must be something external, that it may be apprehended by the senses, and understood and thereby be brought into the heart,* as indeed the entire Gospel is an external, verbal preaching. In short, what God does and works in us He proposes to work through such external ordinances.[9]

While this is a very realistic view of man, is it also Scriptural? Unquestionably. In the article on free will in the Formula of Concord, we read the following:

> . . . God the Holy Ghost, however, does not effect conversion without means, but uses for this purpose the preaching and hearing of God's Word, as it is written, Rom. 1, 16: *The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.* Also Rom. 10, 17: *Faith comes by hearing the Word of God,* etc.[10]

Finally, once the Spirit has used His means to cross over the external threshhold into our hearts, do we then finally *sense* His activity directly or sustain some special spiritual experience? Both Scripture and the Confessions uphold, of course, the presence of such fruits of the Spirit in our hearts as faith, hope, love, and the other Christian virtues, even as their presence there is also reflected in the Christian life. But even here we need not seek any extraordinary or overpowering experiences of being touched by the Spirit:

> . . . When the Word of God is preached purely and truly . . . and men listen attentively and earnestly and meditate upon it, God is certainly present with His grace, and grants . . . what otherwise man can neither accept nor give from his own powers. For concerning the presence, operation, and gifts of the Holy Ghost we should not and cannot always judge *ex sensu* [from feeling] as to how and when they are experienced in the heart . . . because they are often covered and occur in great weakness . . . .[11]

This, then, is how the Lutheran confessions deal with enthusiasm as a theological category. While Luther and the other reformers might have been surprised, if not shocked, by the unanticipated challenge from the Radical Reformation once the fracture with Rome had yawned open, they met this challenge with a theological response that was Scriptural, solid, credible, extremely objective, and a masterpiece of psychology to boot. Thank God for the means of grace!

Footnotes

1. A single reference to *Schwärmerei* surfaces at FC-SD VII, 33 and two references to *Schwärmergeister* at Ap. XXI, 43 and LC IV, 61; *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), pp. 983, 357, 747. All references to the Lutheran Confessions are from this edition.
2. Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), p. 261.
3. LC I, 54.
4. FC-Ep. II, 13.
5. SA III, 8, 3-13.
6. SC II, 6.
7. LC II, 61 f.; italics mine.
8. LC IV, 22.
9. LC IV, 30; italics mine.
10. FC-Ep. II, 4 f.
11. FC-SD II, 55 f.

Homiletical Studies

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
Galatians 5:16-24
September 7, 1980

Although the flesh, our natural sinful nature, is not at rest but constantly opposes the new man, the Holy Spirit does not rest either but in the severity of the battle (vs 16-17) strengthens us so we do not gratify fleshly desires. The person who is led by the Spirit is no longer under the Law (v 18), keeping the Law in order to be saved. In vs 19-21 Paul designates the works of the flesh which are in opposition to God and to the new life in the Christian. Four classes of sins are mentioned: immorality, idolatry, enmity, carousing. Gentile churches were peculiarly subject to these sins. Paul repeats his warning (v 21) that those who practice *(prassontes*, i.e., habitually practice; not a form of *poieo*, i.e., occasionally do) these things will not inherit the kingdom of God. In contrast to the works of the flesh are virtues (v 22-23) which are an outgrowth of the life of the Spirit. These are states of mind or habits of feeling more than concrete actions. The genitive, "of the Spirit," denotes that these belong to the Spirit in that the Spirit influences Christians to produce them. Yet there is strenous endeavor on the part of the Christian because of the opposition of his flesh. The singular "fruit" *(karpos)* emphasizes that the fruits comprise an organic unity. They are consistent with each other so that one fruit does not take away from another. "Fruit" points to wholeness and harmony, which is not the case with the works of the flesh. They are confusing and conflicting, contending with each other for mastery in a human being. For these fruits to be produced, the Spirit must work an inner change. A bad tree cannot produce good fruit. These fruits are not produced under the compulsion of the Law (v 23b) but are the normal outcropping of the Holy Spirit within. The new life of the Christian will express itself in a crucifying of the flesh and in genuinely fine fruit.

The central thought of the text is that the Holy Spirit empowers Christians to crucify their sinful flesh and to produce beautiful spiritual fruit. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would more fully produce the fruit of the Spirit. The problem is that the flesh sometimes gets the upper hand. The means to the goal is that the strong Spirit dwelling in us who belong to Christ leads us to ever greater production of fruit.

Introduction: A person with whom I worked at a chemical plant one summer when I was going to college informed me almost every Friday, "Boy, am I going to live it up this weekend!" And on Monday, without fail, he would regale me with stories of his drinking and carousing. This is the common notion of "living it up." Maybe we Christians get the idea sometimes that we cannot have any fun, that we cannot really live it up. But that is not so. Our text says we can. It tells us how we can be

Living It Up As Christians

I. Crucifying the flesh.
   A. It is a real battle to crucify the flesh.
      1. Our sinful human nature constantly opposes our new spiritual nature (v 17).
      2. From the sinful nature spring powerful desires that contend for mastery in our lives.
      3. These desires, if yielded to, lead to works which may bring momentary gratification but in the end bring confusion, conflict, and condemnation (v 19-21).

B. Yet we can win more and more battles.
   1. Because Jesus has already won the war by His death and resurrection, and we who "belong to Christ Jesus" (v 24a) participate in His victory (Ro 7:24-25).
   2. Because the Holy Spirit is in us and leads us so to walk that we do not gratify the flesh (vs 16-18).
   3. The fight will not let up as long as we live, but by the Spirit we will experience an increasing number of victories. We are not helpless victims of our instincts and drives. That is exhilerating. That is living it up as Christians.

II. Producing the fruit of the Spirit.
   A. These fruits are qualities or states of mind.
      1. They are not natural attributes, which are always a bit one-sided.
      2. They are qualities of Christ himself; they come with Him. Therefore every person who belongs to Christ has all these fruits to a greater or a lesser degree. We do not just naturally get better or nicer.
      3. A whole new kind of life is possible in which we give evidence of Christ in us.
   B. Our job is not to be fruit inspectors but fruit producers.
      1. We are not to measure others' performance or our own: Am I patient? Am I joyful? Am I loving?
      2. Producing fruit is a matter of doing as much as we know of God's will.
      3. Producing fruit is a matter of attitude: What is pleasing to Christ?
      4. The Spirit does not bring about fruit production by just adding a touch of love, a bit of patience, a dash of kindness. He does not work with us in the way a sculptor does with a statue, chipping away here and there, all the time remaining separate and outside his creation. He works in us, infusing Christ's life into ours so that we become more and more like Christ.

Conclusion: Is not that an exciting way to live? That is living it up as Christians.

GA

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
Galatians 5:25-6:10
September 14, 1980

Some of the Galatians doubted the sole sufficiency of the Gospel. They said that the Old Testament law still had to be observed and fulfilled. One reason for this, they claimed, is that without the restrictions of the law, profligate and wanton living would surely result. In this epistle, Paul defends the simple and pure Gospel. He establishes the primacy of Gospel over Law both in time and in intent (cf. chapter 3), and in chapters five and six he answers the "profligacy" objection by saying (1) that faith is not simple head-knowledge but trust which is active in love (cf. 5:6) and (2) that God calls his people to holiness. He says that the new covenant is not something which is at odds with the old. Rather, the Law, in addition to exposing sin, was the Jews' *paidagogos* to lead them to Christ. The regulations of the sacrifices pointed to the perfect sacrifice of the new covenant, while the regulations of life pointed to the kind of person God would create in the new covenant, namely, the Spirit-controlled man who lives by love. Therefore, he talks about love and the law of Christ, which is the law of love, for the law of love given by Christ is the fullest expression of the will of God for his people, the "fulfillment," if you will, of the Old Testament Law (cf. Mt 5:17, 18). In our text, Paul describes what the life of love is like and specifies what some of the implications are for the law of love in everyday life.

Chapter 5:25 states the basic assumption — that we *do* live by the Spirit. Now we are to show this fact forth. Chapter 6:1 probably refers to "getting caught in the act" (note the emphatic position of the verb, plus *kai*, in the word order). The "spirit of meekness" is not hendiays for "meekly" but the Holy Spirit, whose fruit is meekness. "Restoring" pertains both to the man's status before God and to his status in the Christian community. In the following verse Paul says that Christians ought to bear one another's burdens, not the burden of legal regulations. Notice how the command reflects the fact that the Christian's life is like Christ's who bore our griefs and sorrows (Is 53) and our infirmities (Mt 8:17). Verse 5 does not contradict verse 2. Paul is saying that each man will be weighed down with his own shortcomings, if he examines himself and does not simply look at others. Pay for preachers is probably not the point of verse 6 but the matter of listening to and heeding the good things which the teacher of the Gospel has to impart. In regard to verse 7: Every man has a god, Luther said — God or mammon. Everyone is controlled by one of two forces, the flesh, or the Spirit.

Introduction: Every person is either a slave to God or a slave to sin, death, and the devil.

Because We Are Saved, Let Us Live "Life" And No Longer Be Controlled By The Forces Of Sin And Death

I. If a person is a slave to sin:
   A. He will show forth his slavery daily in one of two ways.
      1. He will be a legalist and be proud of his own accomplishments.
         a. The Galatians sought to obey the Judaic Law fully.
         b. We may seek to be saved by our obedient life.
      2. He will be a profligate.
         a. Some of the Galatians used their freedom as a pretext for satisfying their every desire.
         b. Our society, media, urges us to do the same.
   B. He will eventually reap destruction.
      1. The ways of the law issue in condemnation and therefore in death.
      2. Profligacy also issues in death, for all that resists God will eventually be destroyed.

II. If a person is a slave to God:
   A. He will reap eternal life.
      1. God gives life to conquer death through His Spirit.
      2. We have this eternal life right now.
      3. Though the results of this life may be hidden now, they will finally bear fruit and be forthcoming.
   B. Led by the Spirit of God he will daily walk according to Christ's law of love.
      1. Christ's "law" supersedes the Old Testament law and consists simply in service, first to Christians, then to all men.
      2. Christ's "law" leads us to serve others and not ourselves and such "burden-bearing" precludes profligacy.
   C. He will live under the forgiving grace of God.
      1. Even for the child of God, sin is inevitable; faults occur.
      2. As a child of God, forgiveness is his, both from God and from his brothers.
      3. This forgiveness is found in the word of God shared by believers in the Christian community.

JWV

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
Ephesians 3:13-21
September 21, 1980

The theme of Ephesians is stated in the first part of chapter 3: the mystery of God has now been revealed, *viz.,* that all men, both Jew and Gentile, are heirs of the promise of God (3:6). Paul says that he has been entrusted with this glorious message (3:7) and will both proclaim it (3:8) and bring it to light (3:9) for all the world to see (3:10). It will be manifested in the church (3:10, v21). The key is Jesus, in whom we have salvation and, therefore, boldness to approach God (3:12) as we believe in Him (3:12).

From this perspective, Paul, in our text, asks his hearers not to grow weary of his afflictions (v13), which, he says, are on their behalf (cf. 3:1 and Col 1:24). Versus 14 and 15 reflect nicely the cosmic significance of God's redemptive act in Christ Jesus (cf. 1:10 and 3:10), while vv16 and 17 show again (cf. Ro 7) Paul's deep understanding of Christian anthropology: the inner man is the "new man" (cf. 2 Cor 4:16), which is the believer's "true nature" as a Christian, but it needs strengthening daily, and that through the Holy Spirit. Verse 17 is probably appositional to "being strengthened" in v16 and describes this ultimate gift of God from another point of view: the indwelling of Christ in our hearts through faith. The perfect participles at the end of v17 should be read as part of the *hina* clause of v18. The entire thought gives the purpose of the strengthening and indwelling just mentioned: being rooted and founded in love, we will be able to comprehend God's great and glorious plans and know his all-surpassing love. This God is worthy of all praise (vv20, 21).

Introduction: We hear so much about salvation and being saved. What does "salvation" mean? In the text Paul says salvation is God acting for the whole world's benefit. He describes

God's Glorious, Cosmic Salvation

I. Glorious in view of what God has to overcome.
   A. A "universe-al," cosmic, rebellion against God is in progress.
      1. Powerful evil forces "in the heavenly places" (cf. 3:10) enthrall all things.
      2. These forces are active *now;* they are not relics of a past age.
   B. Each human being is part of the rebellion.
      1. The fallen nature of man is at enmity with God.
      2. Even Christians participate in this rebellion, as their "outer man" wars against the "inner man" (new Adam).

II. Glorious in view of what God did to overcome.
   A. He has conquered the evil forces.
      1. God is more powerful than anything evil — Satan, witchcraft, demons.
      2. He has shown His superior power in the life and work of Christ.
      3. He conquered the evil forces once and for all in the death and resurrection of Christ.
   B. God has conquered you.
      1. He has brought you to faith, so that He is now your Father and you His child.
      2. He has renewed you (the "inner man"); as you are in Christ, Christ lives in you.
      3. He helps you to grow in your faith.
         a. God's purposes are not always clear to His children.
         b. We can be sure that, as we are rooted in Him, we will grow in our understanding of God's ways.

JWV

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
Ephesians 4:1-6
September 28, 1980

The lesson for this Sunday follows directly after the lesson for the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity. It begins a section of commands: imperatives and prohibitions. This section follows chapters 1-3, which are indicative in nature (stating facts), and in so doing illustrates good Biblical theology: statements of God's grace and salvation *precede* demands for holy living. Here is the proper pattern: You have been saved; therefore, show forth your salvation. (Cf. the OT: first the exodus, then Sinai, Ex 20:2.) Note verse one of our text, especially the *oun*. Paul says, On the basis of what I have just described, I now exhort you . . . walk worthy of your high calling. (This verse is really a summary of the next three chapters.) In the rest of the verses, Paul describes what it means to walk in a manner worthy of Christ's salvation. Key words like "humility," "meekness," "longsuffering," "love," and "peace" abound. He also returns to his theme of the mystery of God, the oneness of Jew and Gentile in Christ; hence the emphasis on unity in vv3-6. (It is in this sense that "one baptism" is to be understood, v5. It is not speaking to the issue of a second or Pentecostal baptism.)

Living As Part Of The Restored Creation

I. Recalling our restoration.
  A. God's purpose is to restore us to wholeness.
    1. God is more powerful than the forces of dissolution within us and around us.
    2. The church is the preliminary fulfillment of God's plan to unite all things in Christ.
  B. You personally have been restored to wholeness through faith and baptism.
    1. You have been made one with God.
    2. You have been made one with your fellow-believers.
II. Acting like restored people.
  A. Living in unity with your redeemed brothers and sisters in Christ.
    1. Since we have all been saved by God's action, there is no difference — no one has merit.
    2. Therefore, we can be at peace with one another.
  B. Serving your redeemed brothers and sisters in Christ.
    1. As Christ served, now we also are called to serve.
    2. In such service, the unity and harmony of all creation is restored.

JWV

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
I Corinthians 1:4-9
October 5, 1980

Paul remained in Corinth one and one-half years on his second missionary journey. His letter is in response to a letter he received from the Corinthians in which they asked a number of questions. Verse 4: Paul's thanksgiving is a feature in almost every epistle except Galatians. "All this": constantly. "I thank my God": even though this letter was written "with many tears" (2 Cor 2:4). "Given you": The aorist refers to the decisive moment of their conversion. "Grace": The undeserved love of God given once is given forever and is continually manifested. "In Christ Jesus": God's manifestation of grace is always in connection with Christ Jesus (Ro 6:23; 2 Cor 4:11-12; Col 3:3-4; 2 Tm 1:1; I Jn 5:11). Verse 5: "In Him": in your union with Christ by faith. "Utterance" *(logos)* means "dis-

course" or "reason." Luther: "in all doctrine." They had insight into the truth of the doctrine of God and its application. Verse 6: "Even as": inasmuch as. "The testimony of Christ": the testimony about Christ. "Was confirmed": Not only was it established among them, but they were living confirmations of the testimony. Verse 7: "Gift": gift of grace (I Cor 12:1-11) needed for edification. "Come behind": fall short. The Christians expected the return of the Lord soon (I Th 1:9-10; Jn 5:8-9; I Pe 4:7; I Jn 2:18; Re 22:20). Verse 8: "Who" refers to Christ. "Confirm you": strengthen you, ratify you, make you steadfast and unmoved in the face of judgment. Beck: "so that no one can accuse you on the day of the Lord Jesus Christ." Unto the end": to the end of this age and to the coming of Christ (Mt 28:20; He 3:6:13; 6:11). "Blameless": unimpeached (Col 1:32; I Tm 3:18; Tt 1:6). He will establish us to be blameless, that we should no longer be guilty and under the condemnation (Ro 8:33-34). The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us by faith (Php 3:9). Verse 9: "Called": The call is the pledge of the final blessing (Ro 8:30). Our hope of eternal life is based upon the promise of God, who is the faithful God (Tt 1:2). Note that each verse in this pericope has a reference to Christ.

Introduction: A person can live on the level of complaining or thanksgiving. Paul lives on the level of thanksgiving as he thinks of the divine blessings showered upon the Corinthian Christians.

Living In A Spirit Of Thanksgiving.

I. For God's grace.
   A. God's grace is revealed in Christ Jesus, v4.
      1. The world is estranged from God.
      2. God was in Christ reconciling the world to God (2 Cor 5:18-20).
   B. The Holy Spirit has made us rich.
      1. He brought us to faith through the Gospel (v6. Ro 1:16-17).
         a. The knowledge of doctrine (v5).
         b. The ability to apply doctrine (v5).
      2. He endows with special gifts (v7. cf. I Cor 12).
         a. Some gifts of the early Church have fallen away but some are still in use (cf. I Cor 12).
         b. Any gift of the Spirit is to be used, not for self-aggrandizement, but to edify (I Cor 12:7; 14:12).

Summation: Let us thank God always for the gift of His Son and for the gift of faith and the abilities God gives. Let us use our gifts for building up the body of Christ.

II. For God's faithfulness (v7).
   A. The early Christians waited in faith for the coming of the Lord as we do (v7).
      1. Christ has promised to come again to judge the living and the dead (Jn 14:3; Mt 25:31ff.).
      2. This is a glorious day for the Church (Re 7:9ff.).

Transition: We may wonder whether we will enter our eternal home. The devil likes to fill us with doubts.

   B. We are certain that God is faithful (v9).
      1. He gave us a foretaste and pledge of heaven by calling us into fellowship with Christ (v9; Ro 8:30).
      2. He will confirm us, strengthen us, unto the end (v8; Jude 24; Jn 10:27-29).
         a. So that no one will be able successfully to accuse us on judgment day (v8; Ro 8:33-34).
         b. So that we will be with Christ forever (I Jn 3:1-2).

Conclusion: Let us live lives of thankfulness to God for His grace and faithfulness. May the grace and faithfulness of God comfort us in life and death and motivate us to lives of Christian service.

HJE

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
Ephesians 4:22-28
October 12, 1980

"Put off" *(apothesthai):* as we put off a garment (v 22). The reference is not to change merely of opinions or customs, but to one of life and character. The present participle *phtheiromenon* indicates a process of corruption. The "old man" deceives with his lusts, and, if unchecked, will bring ruin. The verb, "be renewed," is passive, expressing spiritual change or transformation from old to new. "Put on" *(endusasthai)* (v 24) is aorist, as in v 22, to indicate an act, while renewal (v 23) is a process. We are to live the kind of life that shows we are a new creation according to the divine likeness in true righteousness and holiness. There is to be something better than the ceremonial rectitude of the Pharisee or the self-contained virtue of the heathen. This is righteousness and holiness expressed in right conduct born of the Gospel. Therefore (v 25), because *(dio)* of putting off the old man and putting on the new, certain actions follow. Christians are to be truthful with one another because of their union with each other through their union with Christ. As each member of the human body is of and for the other in service, so it is in the spiritual body. Anger has its rightful place but it can easily pass into the sinful (v 26). Even righteous wrath (Mk 3:5) can pass into sin if over-indulged. Anger *(Parorgismos,* used only here in the New Testament) denotes exasperation, sudden violent anger which must be checked without delay (Ps 4:4). The activity of the devil demands vigilance at all times so that he does not get a foothold (v 27). Even Christians might continue to steal; so they must be warned to cease (v 28). Among the Ephesians stealing was probably a result of laziness. The apostle urges them to do honest work. By working one acquires not only what he needs but is able to help others.

The central thought of the text is that putting off the old man and putting on the new issues in right conduct. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would live righteously in their relationship to each other and to God. The problem is that unrighteous conduct often manifests itself among Christians. The means to the goal is our union with Christ, which empowers us to recognize our union with one another and to treat one another accordingly.

Introduction: If you were offered a new dishwasher for your broken one, would you take it? If you were offered a new suit for your worn-out one, would you take it? Sometimes old things may be preferred to new — valuable antique cars or historical artifacts, for example — but ordinarily we prefer the new to the old. The kind of new thing Paul talks about in our text is certainly to be preferred to the old thing that he puts alongside it. He describes our life as Christians as

Putting Off The Old And Putting On The New

I. This is possible in Jesus.
   A. We cannot put off the old man and put on the new man by sheer willpower and determination.
      1. Our old man is utterly corrupt (Jr 17:9).
      2. Its lusts are terribly deceitful (v 22b).
   B. We need help from Jesus.
      1. We have been taught the truth as it is in Jesus (v 21b). All Christian truth centers in Christ and His redemptive work.

2. Our putting off the old man and putting on the new is a way of participating by faith in Christ's death and resurrection.
3. Our union with Christ by faith results in an ongoing renewal of our mind in which we daily cast off the old man like a garment and clothe ourselves in the new (v 23).

II. This shows itself in right behavior.
A. We speak the truth with one another (v 25).
1. We are often so afraid of being thought fanatic that we end up "not only not calling a spade a shovel but pretending it really is a silver spoon." No more of those "little lies"!
2. We must put away falsehood and speak the truth, because as new people in Christ we are joined to Christ and to one another. Members of the same body do not work against each other.

B. We avoid sinning when we become angry.
1. There is a place for righteous anger (Mt 21:12-13).
2. But even righteous anger can easily become sinful if retained. Sudden outbursts of anger will certainly need to be checked.

C. We deal honestly with one another.
1. Although we do not rob banks or forge checks, stealing may be done in more subtle ways — listing unqualified dinners and trips as business expenses, gouging customers in car or appliance repairs, stealing reputations by gossiping.
2. We must put in a full day's work for our pay, not only to be honest with our employers, but also so that we can work for what we have and give to others.

Conclusion: Sometimes the old may be preferred to the new. But when it comes to the old nature and the new nature, the new is certainly to be preferred. Putting off the old and putting on the new is what Christian living is all about.

GA

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
Ephesians 5:15-21
October 19, 1980

St. Paul has contrasted the "sons of disobedience" with the "children of light" in Eph 5:1-14. He warns that the world is very evil (v16). Yet he does not want God's people to have merely a survival mentality. These are opportune times (*kairos,* v16), times that can be redeemed (same word as in Ga 3:13, 4:5) or "made the most of," as believers witness to outsiders (Col 4:5) and to fellow-believers (vv19-21). The times will not be used wisely by simply following the world's ways, as with drunkenness (vv15-18). The word translated "debauchery" (v18) has the implication of wastefulness, as well as immorality. Rather, believers must keep "gaining insight" as to God's will (v17), looking at their lives in comparison (v15), and then trying not to live in "foolish" ways (v17). The word translated "foolish" implies morally stupid actions. Believers will thus contrast with unbelievers and be witnesses to them and to the light of Christ (v14), making the best use of their time among them.

Likewise, time will not be used wisely among believers, if all that people talk about is the weather, sports, or their accomplishments. No edification will go on in that way (4:29-32). Rather, Christians should address one another with God's Word and spiritual wisdom (v19), living in humility toward one another (v21 — this verse belongs grammatically with vv15-20, as the Nestle text editors and most older commentators agree) For it is God who deserves all the glory and

thanks for what He has done in Christ (vv20, 21). Here is the Gospel of a God who has redeemed us in Jesus and now keeps on filling us with the Holy Spirit (v18), so that we can make the most of the time we have.

Introduction: Many Christians live with a "fortress" complex. The days are so evil that all they think they can do is protect themselves and survive. In contrast, Paul says these are opportune times which we can "redeem," make the most of, among believers and unbelievers (v16).

Make The Most Of The Time!

I. Make the most of the time by walking wisely among unbelievers. How?
   A. Seek to understand God's will (v17).
      1. It centers in Jesus Christ and trusting Him (Jn 6:28, 39-40).
      2. Understanding comes through God's mercy and blessing along (v14, Ro 12:1-2, Col 1:9-10).
   B. Look carefully at how you are living (v15).
      1. Examine your life in the light of what God wants you to do.
      2. Ask forgiveness and strength for a new life (I Jn 1:8-10).
   C. Avoid foolish, wasteful, and dissipating activity (vv17-18).
      1. Excessive drinking is a prime example.
      2. It is the opposite of God's wisdom and good use of time (Pr 23:29-24:7).

Summation: Your different style of life will show and will be a good witness, day by day, to unbelievers.

II. Make the most of the time by worshipping thankfully and humbly among believers.
   A. Seek always to edify one another (4:29).
      1. Talk with one another about God's Word and spiritual matters (v19, Col 3:16).
      2. Be humble and submissive with one another, as Christ was our servant (v21, I Pe 5:1-5).
   B. Give all praise and thanksgiving to God (vv19-20).
      1. He deserves all the credit (2:8-10).
      2. Our songs and praises are sweet to Him (Ps 33:1-3).
      3. He fills us with His Spirit, so that we can respond to Him (v18, 2:16ff.).

Summation: Your faith will be strengthened in this way, and you will be a blessing to other believers, to the glory of God, every time that you get together.

Conclusion: All the verbs in this text are present tenses. These are things that we are to be doing continually by God's grace. Every moment we have is prime time to make the most of!

James P. Barton
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TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
Ephesians 6:10-17
November 4, 1979

This text and theme would have sounded strange, even outrageous, to the hearers of ten or fifteen years ago. Scientific, modern, futuristic humans had arrived. The unexplainable could be explained, the mysterious could be penetrated. God was dead, Satan was silly, and evil could be eradicated with money and good intentions. This is not so today. The mysteries have returned, some of them mere superstitions, but others fearful and despairing of rational solution. Among these is an intense interest in the occult and satanic. The devil is "in"!

"The Exorcist" and its imitations on the screen are popular manifestations of this phenomenon. For some the devil is a silly being dressed in red long-johns. For others he is so real that demon-possession is feared. And for most, including many Christians, there is profound ignorance of the devil. The preacher has to deal with all of these views among his hearers. Yet the preacher has an over-riding goal that this text emphasizes in verse 13. We need to allow God's Spirit to enable the hearers to "take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Facing Up To The Devil

I. Do not underestimate the devil!
   A. He is a real "person."
      1. He came personally to the first Adam.
      2. He came personally to the second Adam, Jesus, in the wilderness.
      3. Luther: "A Christian should know that he is sitting among devils and that the devil is closer to him than his coat or shirt."
   B. He is called Satan (accuser) and devil (adversary).
   C. His influence pervades the "atmosphere" (Eph 2:2).
      1. Demon-possession is like sighting a polluting smokestack; it is localized and easily seen.
      2. Be more aware of the "invisible pollutants" of demonic influence (v12).
      3. Do not limit Satan to one tiny place or influence; it is certain that he does not do so!

II. Do not overestimate the devil!
   A. Devils are fallen angels who rebelled.
      1. They oppose God and all that is good.
      2. They will nevertheless be judged and damned.
   B. Know Satan's power and limitations.
      1. The devil is cunning, but not all-knowing.
      2. The devil is powerful, but not all-powerful.
         a. Jesus was tempted from *outside* in the wilderness.
         b. God limits Satan's power (I Cor 10:13).
         c. We cannot rationalize, therefore, saying, "The devil made me do it."
   C. Give the devil his due, but not too much due!

III. Stand up to the devil (vv10-11, 13-17)! The "evil day" is that day when God's love, care, mercy, and even His existence are called into question. On that day:
   A. Gird yourself with truth.
      1. The devil tries to persuade with lies and half-truths.
         a. "God knows that if you eat . . ."
         b. "All these I will give you . . ."
      2. The basic truth in which we stand is: "You shall worship the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind."
   B. Put on the breastplate of righteousness.
      1. We are vulnerable to the devil's "Yea, hath God said?" for our righteousness is a gift which we do not deserve.
      2. Yet the breastplate covers the cleansed heart, and we can stand firm and say, "Yea, God *hath* said so!"
   C. Let your feet be shod with the Gospel of peace.
      1. What if the forces of evil are hurled against us? Can we stand?
      2. We stand in the peace of God through Christ.
   D. Hold the shield of faith.

1. Temptations will not be stopped by plastic crosses or plastic religion.
2. Faith in Christ stands between us and temptation.

E. Put on the helmet of salvation.
1. Especially in times of trial we may question our salvation.
2. Then we must look beyond what we think to what God "thinks" of us.

F. Take the sword of salvation.
1. This is the offensive weapon of God's Word.
2. This is the same weapon — nothing more or less — that Jesus used.

Conclusion: The devil is real and cunning and powerful, and he wants you and me! Do not underestimate the devil's power. But do not overestimate it either. God has equipped us with His mighty protection and with the word of His promise. Stand, therefore, in Christ your mighty Victor!

Richard G. Kapfer
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TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
Philippians 1:3-11
November 11, 1979

I once knew a minister who refused to acknowledge or thank anyone in his congregation publicly because he was afraid that someone might become prideful. Too many ministers, upon leaving a congregation, experience such an outpouring of love that they cannot help wondering why that affection had to wait until they were leaving. We Christians are not very good at affirming each other, and ministers are no exceptions to this rule. St. Paul, however, was very good at commendation, and not just to a "good" congregation like that at Philippi, but also to a "bad" congregation like that at Corinth (I Cor 1:4-7). This text presents an opportunity for the preacher to thank God for his people publicly and to encourage them toward being the best people God can make them.

A Joy-Filled Thanksgiving

I. For our partnership in the Gospel (vv3, 4).
A. Partnership requires selflessness.
1. We call this servanthood, being foot-washers, being a community of self-forgetful people. (One should use examples from his own congregation.)
2. Our "status" is found in Jesus Christ (Php 2:5-7).

B. Partnership requires trust.
1. You have trusted that your pastor is not the only saint, but an equipper of the saints.
2. You have trusted that God is working in you through Word and Sacrament to build you up as partners in the Gospel.

II. For our growth (v9).
A. We can point to statistical growth.
1. We have grown in the number of people reached and won to Christ.
2. We have grown in the number of people fed upon the Word.

B. We can especially point to growth in love.
1. We could easily become self-centered and self-satisfied.
2. But the Lord has produced "knowledgeable love" among us.
a. You are God's creative minority in the world, and you know it!
b. You have learned to make the classroom, workbench, and kitchen sink an "altar" where God is praised and love is shared.
3. The Lord has produced "discerning love" among us.

a. This shows in our Christian marriages and Christian homes.
b. This shows in difficult choices and trying times that you have experienced.

III. For our goal (vv6, 10-11).
A. We continue to operate with congregational goals: in Sunday School and Bible Class enrollment, in evangelism, etc.
B. Above every goal stands the ultimate goal.
1. Our goal is to make every day a day of service to Christ.
2. Our goal is to overflow with the "fruits of righteousness."
3. Our final goal is to be ready for the Day of Christ and eternal life.

Conclusion: In the meantime, in the time of grace today, we pause to speak to God of joy — for our partnership in the Gospel, for our growth as Christ's people, and for the eternal goal that is ours by faith.

RGK

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
Philippians 3:17-21
November 18, 1979

We live in a time of apathy. There is the old joke about an interviewer asking, "Do you think people are apathetic today?" And the answer came: "I don't know, and I don't care." It is so easy for Christians and Christian congregations to get off track, to forget what they are and what they have. In spite of the positive things which St. Paul could say about the Philippian congregation, he saw lurking in the shadows the possibility of it getting disrailed and losing all that Christ had gained for the Philippians. Apathy gets us off the track. This is why Paul wrote (v16): "Only let us hold true to what we have attained." We get smug, self-satisfied, and sit back. But we never live in a vacuum. The devil, the world, and our flesh stand ready to enter in and take us far from the "goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (v14). The text tells us about:

Getting Back On The Track

I. By remembering our calling (v17).
A. None of us can duplicate the example of St. Paul's life (2 Cor 6:3-10).
B. But we can imitate his faith (Php 3:14).
C. We can admit our daily need for God's forgiving power (Php 3:12).
D. You and I are "sermons" to each other.
1. Parents to children.
2. Young to old, old to young.
3. Mature to the immature.

II. By examining our lives (vv18, 19).
A. Be sure that you are not a "poor imitation."
1. Those who have gone off the track can be identified: "Their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things."
2. Check yourself out.
3. Confess your faults to God, who alone can get you back on track.
B. Turn the poor imitations around.
1. Be an example of those who delight to feast on God's food (and thereby defeat the belly-food of selfishness).
2. Be an example of those whose daily conduct praises God (and thereby defeat the god of shameful self-gratification).
3. Be an example of those who are lovingly involved in the world which God loves (and thereby defeat those who make this world into a god).

III. By remembering our destiny (vv20, 21).
A. Recall the promises of God.
1. The Emmaus disciples got disrailed by discouragement.
2. Jesus answered them with the question, "Have you not read the Scriptures?"
B. Recall the hope in which we live.
1. We can so easily suffer from "compassion fatigue."
2. Then we can remember the King and the kingdom.

Conclusion: The belly servers, the shame-revelers, the this-world people will not endure. We who "hold true to what we have attained" surely will.

RGK

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
Colossians 1:9-14
November 16, 1980

The Colossian heresy is not dry history. Still today we are tempted to think that we are not smart enough, do not understand enough, and do not live well enough to be acceptable to God and to qualify for His kingdom. To this fear St. Paul addresses himself, piling up the images which depict how God qualifies us (v12) by Christ's own saving work: rescuing us from captivity (v13), moving us to a new kingdom (v13), making payment for us (v14), and forgiving us our sins (v14). All this He did by submitting to the hour of the "power of darkness" (Lk 22:53) and conquering Satan by "His glorious might." In Christ we are already qualified. The inheritance is ours. We have redemption.

This "spiritual wisdom" is active wisdom and transforms our lives (vv9-10, Ro 12:2) from qualification-rounds for heaven, in which we must perform properly, to daily opportunities to thank the Lord with joy for His love and mercy in Christ (vv11-12). We bear fruit and desire to please the Lord only through His power and because of what He already has done for us (vv9-11 I Th 2:12, Eph 2:10). God fills us with His wisdom, as we listen to His Word alone (v9, Ac 20:32, in contrast with 2 Tm 3:7). The qualifying is all God's doing, and it is ours by faith in Christ. Paul prays that we know that and believe it!

Introduction: How disappointing it is when you have your heart set on winning something and suddenly find that you are disqualified. How much more tragic it is to be desiring a heavenly inheritance and to discover yourself disqualified. But it need not happen. You do qualify!

You Qualify!

I. Christ has met the qualifications for you!
A. The requirements seem impossible.
1. The price is too high for us to pay (Mt 18:23-25, Ac 8:18-20).
2. We are too deep in darkness and captivity (v13, Eph 2:2-3, 6:12).
3. We do not have the strength and knowledge that we need.
B. Christ has fulfilled everything for you.
1. He has paid the price (v14, Eph 1:7).
2. He has delivered us from captivity (v13, Lk 22:53).
3. He has been strong and true in every respect (vv10-11).
C. God therefore counts you as qualified by faith in Christ and His work for you (v12, vv4-6, Eph 1:18-19, Ac 26:17-18).

Transition: We are in the running. We qualify now through Christ. But how do we know that we will not be disqualified later on? After all, we are still so weak.

II. Christ strengthens you to perform worthily.
   A. He fills us with knowledge (v9, Eph 1:17-18).
   B. He strengthens us through His Word (v11, Ac 20:32, not like 2 Tm 3:7).
   C. He makes us so thankful that we want to do well for Him (vv10, 12).
   D. Even when we stumble, there is forgiveness and new life to keep us going (v14).

Conclusion: You will do well through Christ who strengthens you (Php 4:13). In a sense we have gone far beyond qualifications. We have won already (v14, I Pe 1:3-5)! Let us thank our Lord for the medals of victory (v12).

JPB

LAST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
I Thessalonians 5:1-11
November 23, 1980

Much of I Thessalonians deals with questions about the end time. Here Paul discusses "when" Christ will return. He says that his readers already know "precisely" (v2) that nothing precise can be known about the time of judgment, except that it will come suddenly (vv2-3). Therefore, all need to be alert and self-controlled (v6) and equipped with the faith, hope, and love (v8) which come through Jesus Christ (v9). Then, as sons of the light, they will be prepared for Christ's return (vv4-5) and will be able to help prepare one another (v11). No other person or thing on earth can offer lasting "peace and security," though people often think so (v3). Only Christ can give certainty of salvation in the midst of life and death (vv9-10; see 4:13-18 as a commentary on living with Christ, whether awake or sleeping.) If we have faith in Christ and the hope and love which flow from faith, we have all the essential armor we need to live now and forever. There is no reason to fear the wrath of God any longer (v9).

Introduction: We all experience how difficult it is to be serious about our Christian faith and live it every day. We are in a constant battle with society's way of thinking, with friends who are bad influences, and with our own evil thoughts. We feel so ill-equipped. But there is armor available for us, St. Paul says, so that we may endure to the day of the Lord.

Here Is The Armor You Need

I. We need faith (v8).
   A. The faith we have is often distorted or misguided.
      1. We look for peace and security in people or things (v3, Lk 21:34-35).
      2. We misread times and seasons (v1, Mt 24:23-27).
      3. Ours becomes a lazy, lethargic faith (vv6-7, Lk 12:35-40).
   B. True faith is a gift from God.
      1. It comes through the preaching of Christ (Ro 10:14-17).
      2. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Ga 5:22, Eph 2:8).
      3. It gives us assurance of salvation (v9, Ro 1:17).

II. We need hope (v8).
   A. So much of life right now seems hopeless (e.g., Ro 4:18-21).
   B. We wonder if there is any hope of escaping the coming judgment (vv2-3).
   C. Faith in Christ produces hope in the midst of every situation (vv4-5, 9-10, Ro 5:1-5).

III. We need love (v8).
   A. Often "love" is only self-gratification (I Jn 2:15-17).
   B. Christian love is a gift from God, a fruit of the Spirit (Ga 5:22).

C. It enables us to give one another the needed encouragement until Christ returns (v11).

Conclusion: With faith, hope, and love we have the abiding armor (I Cor 13:13) we need to live now and to eternal life. This is armor which God provides for us, as we put on Christ and live in Him (Ro 13:11-14).

JPB