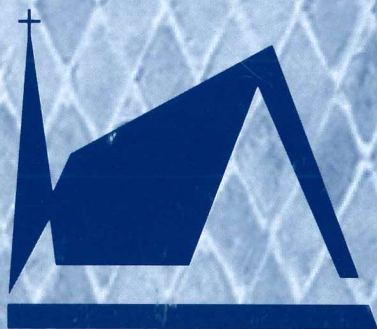


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CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

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Melanchthons Briefwechsel. Band T2. Texte 255-520 (1523-1526). Bearbeitet von Richard Wetzel unter Mitwirkung von Helga Scheible. Lowell C. Green

Augustine Confessions: Books I-IV.

Edited by Gillian Clark John G. Nordling



Rev. Dr. Harold H. Buls
(1920-1997)

† Harold H. Buls †
(1920-1997)

Harold Buls, long-time Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, was called by his Lord to his eternal rest on September 5, 1997, after an illness of several months. Born on January 4, 1920 in Garland, Nebraska, and reborn in the waters of baptism that same year at Zion Lutheran Church, Garland, Nebraska, Dr. Buls began his study for the ministry of the Lutheran

Church at St. John's College, Winfield, Kansas, graduating in 1940. He then entered Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and, following a year of vicarage at Trinity, Brooklyn, New York, he graduated in 1945. He was ordained into the holy ministry for service as a missionary with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Nigeria in June 1946. In 1949 he was called as pastor of the Missionary Board, Alabama Field, and later served on the faculties of the Alabama Lutheran Academy and College, Selma, Alabama (1950-1951), and Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary, Greensboro, North Carolina (1951-1955), before returning to his alma mater, St. John's College (1956-1969).

Dr. Buls came to the Springfield Seminary in 1969 to teach in the department of exegetical theology. An expert in the field of New Testament, he quickly won the students' affection with his fiery orthodoxy and quick wit. Above all, though, was his commitment to the unimpeded and clear proclamation of the Christ of the Scriptures. Never one to "beat around the bush," students and colleagues alike could always count on Dr. Buls to speak his mind directly, though always respectfully and collegially. During his tenure as professor he taught courses on the gospels of Luke and John, as well as the epistles to the Colossians, Galatians, Hebrews, Philipians, and Romans.

He earned his Ph.D. in Classics at the University of Chicago in 1970. His dissertation was entitled, "A Study of the *Clausulae* in Dionysius of Halicanassus." A prolific author, Professor Buls used his exegetical expertise to make the message of the Greek New Testament usable for the parish pastor. Most prominent in this regard were his Exegetical Notes on the Pericopes for the Gospel and Epistle lessons for both the three- and one-year series of readings. Several of these volumes have been translated into Russian.

His retirement from full-time teaching in 1986 freed him to return to his other love, mission work. Over the course of the past decade, when not teaching courses at the Seminary, Dr. Buls, often accompanied by his wife Marge, made a series of trips to teach in mission stations overseas. In places as diverse as Nigeria and St. Petersburg, Dr. Buls shared, in his inimitable style, the centrality of the Gospel: Christ crucified and risen again. On May 23, 1997 the Board for Mission Services of the LCMS acknowledged the special contributions of Dr. Buls to the life of the church by presenting him with an award for outstanding achievements in the mission field. He is survived by his wife Marge, whom he married in 1955, as well as by his children Jonathan, David, Barbara, and Fredrik.

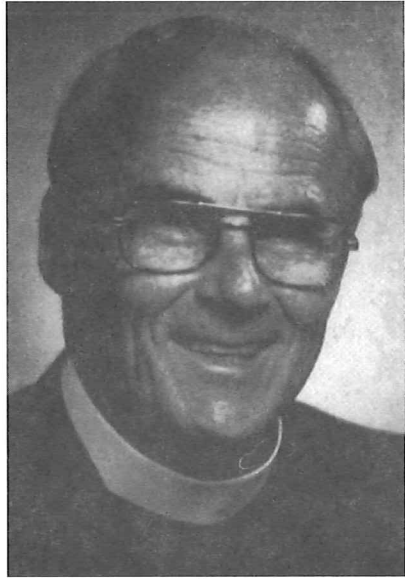
Dr. Buls was buried in Concordia Gardens in Fort Wayne on Tuesday, September 9, 1997, after a service at St. Paul Lutheran Church with his pastor, the Reverend Richard Radke officiating. Speaking for the Seminary was President Dean Wenthe, who noted three outstanding aspects of Dr. Buls' life. He held before us all the unconditional love of Christ. He blessed us with fine scholarship. And finally, "He taught us all the pilgrimage of faith. He lived life as Christ's gift and he lived that life abundantly. For that we are all grateful."

† Mark John Steege, (1906-1997) †

Mark John Steege, Professor of Sermon Theory at Concordia Theological Seminary from 1947-1980, entered eternal life on May 26, 1997 at the age of ninety.

Born September 6, 1906 in Sharon, Wisconsin, he grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where his father was pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church.

Dr. Steege graduated from Concordia College, Milwaukee in 1926 before going on to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, which awarded him the following degrees: B.D. (1930), S.T.M. (1942), and Th.D. (1958). He also did graduate work at the University of South Dakota and Marquette University.



**Rev. Dr. Mark J. Steege
(1906-1997)**

His first service in the Office of the Holy Ministry was as campus pastor for the University of South Dakota, Vermillion (1931- 1932). He later helped found Bethany Lutheran Church of Cedar Rapids, Iowa (1932-1942), and served at St. Paul, Readlyn, Iowa (1942-1946).

In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Dr. Steege served the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod on numerous boards, committees and commissions, including a doctrinal discussion committee with a Finnish Lutheran Church (1950-1966), which resulted in that body merging into the LCMS. He also taught at Oberursel, Germany, and River Forest, Illinois. An essayist at District Conventions in Texas, California, Michigan, Iowa, and Ontario, his scholarly work appeared in the *Lutheran Witness*, *Lutheran Education*, the *Springfielder*, *The Abiding Word*, and *Interaction*. Perhaps his greatest service to the church was as Parliamentarian for the turbulent synodical conventions at Milwaukee (1971), New Orleans (1973), Anaheim (1975), and Dallas (1977).

Dr. Steege was married twice, first to nee Erna Horstmeyer, with whom he was blessed with seven children. His second marriage, to Barbara nee Whalen, was blessed with one daughter. He is survived by his wife Barbara (long-time librarian at CTS), and his children Rev. Mark W., Carol Myers, Richard, Sharon Algar, Susan Krueger, Judith Grande, David, and Elizabeth. President Wenthe of the seminary noted, "The Rev. Dr. Mark Steege brought an expertise in homiletics to the seminary community that was made accessible to generations by virtue of his generous, kind, and pastoral heart. Dr. Steege's great humanity, as well as the marvelous teamwork that he and his wife Barbara displayed over the decades, will live in the memories of countless seminarians." A memorial service remembering this faithful servant was held in Oxford, Massachusetts, June 7, 1997.

PSALM 121

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills:
from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh from the Lord:
which made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:
He that keepeth thee will not slumber.
Behold, he that keepeth Israel:
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is thy Keeper:
the Lord is thy Shade upon thy right hand.
The sun shall not smite thee by day:
nor the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil:
He shall preserve thy soul.
The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in:
from this time forth and even forevermore

13th Annual Symposium on Exegetical Theology

"Canon and Interpretation"

Tuesday, January 20, 1998

- 10:45 a.m. Welcome and Introduction, Dr. Dean O. Wenthe, President, Concordia Theological Seminary
- 11:00 a.m. "How Luke Read Scripture." Dr. James A. Sanders, President, Ancient Biblical Manuscripts Center, Claremont, California
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. "Lutheran Distinctives in the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians." Dr. Gregory J. Lockwood, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology (New Testament), Concordia Theological Seminary
- 1:45 p.m. "The Divine Name in New Testament Christology." Dr. Charles A. Gieschen, Assistant Professor of Exegetical Theology (New Testament), Concordia Theological Seminary
- 2:30 p.m. "The Sprinkled Blood: The Rite of Atonement." Dr. John W. Kleinig, Lecturer in Old Testament and Dean of the Chapel, Luther Seminary, North Adelaide, Australia
- 3:30 p.m. Afternoon Tea
- 4:00 p.m. Vespers
- 4:15 p.m. Exegetical Paper Sectionals
- 5:30 p.m. Dinner
- 7:00 p.m. Schola Cantorum Rehearsal—All alumni singers are invited to attend (Room W-10)

Wednesday, January 21, 1998

- 8:30 a.m. "Post-Modernism and Sacred Scripture: Opportunities for Clarity on the Question of Christ and Culture." Dr. Dean O. Wenthe, Professor of Exegetical Theology (Old Testament), Concordia Theological Seminary
- 9:15 a.m. "The Gradual Psalms in the Canon and the Church." Dr. Douglas McC. L. Judisch, Professor of Exegetical Theology (Old Testament), Concordia Theological Seminary

- 10:00 a.m. Chapel
10:30 a.m. Coffee Break
11:00 a.m. "'He explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself': Luke's Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament." Dr. Arthur A. Just Jr., Professor of Exegetical Theology (New Testament), Concordia Theological Seminary
11:45 a.m. Lunch

21st Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions

and the

11th Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Liturgy

**"The Lutheran Confessions in an Ecumenical
Age: Approaching the Third Millennium"**

"Cultural Adjustments to Liturgy and Hymnody"

Wednesday, January 21, 1998

- 1:00 p.m. "Evangelical and Catholic: A Slogan in Search of a Definition." Dr. David P. Scaer, Systematic Theology Department Chairman, Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary
2:00 p.m. "ELCA—Roman Catholic Agreements and Disagreements on Justification." Dr. R. R. Reno, Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska
3:30 p.m. Coffee Break
4:00 p.m. "*Verbum Dei* as the Grounds of Ecumenism" Father Winthrop Brainerd, Epiphany Church, Washington, District of Columbia
5:00 p.m. Choral Vespers: Seminary Schola Cantorum
5:45 p.m. Dinner
7:00 p.m. Kantorei Anniversary Reception: Luther Hall

Thursday, January 22, 1998

- 8:45 a.m. "The Church in the Twenty-First Century: Will There Be a Lutheran One?" Prof. Kurt E. Marquart, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary
- 10:00 a.m. Choral Matins: Seminary Kantorei
- 10:30 a.m. Coffee Break
- 11:15 a.m. "Lutheran-Reformed-Episcopal Alliances: The Evening Twilight of the Lutheran Church." Rev. Leonard Klein, Pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, York, Pennsylvania; Immediate Past Editor of *Lutheran Forum*
- 12:15 p.m. Lunch
- 1:15 p.m. Organ Recital: Kantor Mark Waldron, Saint John's Lutheran Church, Forest Park, Illinois
- 2:00 p.m. "Multiculturalism's Presence in the Divine Service: Challenge or Threat?" Dr. Alvin J. Schmidt, Professor of Sociology at Illinois College, Jacksonville, Illinois
- 3:15 p.m. Coffee Break
- 3:45 p.m. "The Function of Hymnody in Its Cultural Context." Dr. John W. Kleinig, Lecturer in Old Testament and Dean of the Chapel, Luther Seminary, North Adelaide, Australia
- 5:30 p.m. Symposium Reception: Fort Wayne War Memorial Coliseum
- 6:30 p.m. Symposium Banquet: Fort Wayne War Memorial Coliseum

Friday, January 23, 1998

- 9:00 a.m. Panel Discussion: "Does a Confessional Church Have a Future in an Ecumenical World?"
- 10:00 a.m. Chapel: Kantorei Alumni Choir Anniversary Matins
- 10:30 a.m. Coffee Break
- 11:00 a.m. Audience Questions the Panel
- 12:15 p.m. Adjournment

Books Received

Bynum, Caroline Walker. *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity 200-1336*. Lectures on the History of Religions, Number 15. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995. xx + 368 pages. Paper. \$17.50

Campbell, J. McLeod. *The Nature of the Atonement*, with a new Introduction by James B. Torrance. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Edinburgh: Hansel Press, 1996; original 1856. x + 294 pages. Paper. \$25.00

Deffner, Donald L. *Windows into the Lectionary: Seasonal Anecdotes for Preaching & Teaching*. San Jose, California: Resource Publications Inc., 1996. xxiv + 131 pages. Paper. \$14.95

Erdahl, Lowell O. *10 Habits for Effective Ministry: A Guide for Life-Giving Pastors*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1996. 160 pages. Paper.

Gilpin, W. Clark. *A Preface to Theology*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996. xxv + 211 pages. Paper. \$38.00

Guroian, Vigen. *Life's Living toward Dying: A Theological and Medical-Ethical Study*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1996. xxvii + 108 pages. Paper. \$12.00

Holladay, William L. *Long Ago God Spoke: How Christians May Hear the Old Testament Today*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. x + 353 pages. Paper. \$20.00

Horsley, Richard A. *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996. xii + 240 pages. Paper. \$20.00

Kelly, J. N. D. *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom—Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995. x + 310 pages. Cloth. \$47.50

McNicol, Allan J., editor, with David L. Dungan and David B. Peabody. *Beyond the Q Impasse—Luke's Use of Matthew: A Demonstration by the Research Team of the International Institute for Gospel Studies*. Preface by William Farmer. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996. xvi + 333 pages. Paper. \$25.00

Meilaender, Gilbert. *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996. xi + 120 pages. Paper. \$10.00

Nassif, Bradley, editor. *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1996. xix + 379 pages. Paper. \$20.00

Phillips, Timothy R.; Okholm, Dennis L., editors. *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995. 238 pages. Paper.

Schmiechen, Peter. *Christ the Reconciler: A Theology for Opposites, Differences, and Enemies*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1996. x + 179 pages. Paper. \$16.00

Williams, Stephen N. *Revelation and Reconciliation: A Window on Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. xvii + 180 pages. Paper. \$16.95. Cloth. \$49.95

Witherington III, Ben. *History, Literature and Society in the Book of Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. xx + 374 pages. Cloth.

Luther on Atonement— Reconfigured

Dedicated to the Memory of Dr. Robert Preus

Kenneth Hagen

Luther writes in his 1535 commentary on Galatians:

"I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who suffered, was crucified, and died for us." This is the most joyous of all doctrines and the one that contains the most comfort. It teaches that we have the indescribable and inestimable mercy and love of God. When the merciful Father saw that we were being oppressed through the Law, that we were being held under a curse, and that we could not be liberated from it by anything, He sent His Son into the world, heaped all the sins of all men upon Him, and said to Him: "Be Peter the denier; Paul the persecutor, blasphemer, and assaulter; David the adulterer; the sinner who ate the apple in Paradise; the thief on the cross. In short, be the person of all men, the one who has committed the sins of all men. And see to it that You pay and make satisfaction for them." Now the Law comes and says: "I find Him a sinner, who takes upon Himself the sins of all men. I do not see any other sins than those in Him. Therefore let Him die on the cross!" And so it attacks Him and kills Him. By this deed the whole world is purged and expiated from all sins, and thus it is set free from death and from every evil.¹

Luther on atonement presents a puzzle. When we use the term atonement, we normally think of some kind of payment in blood for sins. Ever since Gustaf Aulén published *Christus Victor* we have tended to think in terms of theories: objective,

¹*Lectures on Galatians (1535), Chapters 1-4*, in *Luther's Works*, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen, 55 volumes (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1958-1986), 26:28. Volumes, in this series are hereafter abbreviated *LW*.

subjective, classical.² The English word atonement suggests "At-One-Ment" with God. None of this helps with regard to Luther. I will argue in this paper that atonement for Luther is more than the expiation won in Christ's blood, more than being "At-One" with God.³

The real puzzle with Luther on atonement is that the words that Luther used to describe the earthly work of Christ do not precisely include atonement. For Luther reconciliation is a prominent word for the work of Christ (*versöhnen* or *Versöhnung*), and the key text is 2 Corinthians 5:19: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." *Versöhnung* is often translated atonement. But *versöhnen* is used in Matthew 5:24 where we are to be reconciled with our neighbor before going to the altar. "Be atoned" with your neighbor does not work. In addition to *Versöhnung*, other words in Luther's German that are translated atonement in the American Edition and elsewhere include *Bezahlung* (payment), *Opfer* (sacrifice), and *gnug thun* (be sufficient). Latin words that are translated atonement include *placare* (appease), *propiciatio* (propitiation), *satisfactio* (satisfaction), and *reconciliatio* (reconciliation). If one looks up "atonement" in the Index to the American Edition of Luther's Works, several words appear.⁴ However, the references do not point the reader to the word "atonement" in the texts. Words that are indexed to atonement include sacrifice, mediate forgiveness, satisfaction, reconciliation, ransom, forgiveness, merit of His blood, and reconciled. In the subject index in the *Concordia Triglotta*,

²Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, translated by A. G. Hebert (London: SPCK, 1953).

³Years ago when lecturing on Luther, I was asked what Luther's theory of atonement was. My immediate reply was that Luther had no theory of atonement. Research for this paper confirms the same assessment.

⁴LW55:17.

atonement does not appear; reconciliation does.⁵ The same is true for Tappert's edition of *The Book of Concord*.⁶

The use of terminology in discussing Luther on atonement is difficult since atonement (*Versöhnung*) is a term that Aulén put on the map of Luther studies. Aulén's vocabulary in translation, however, is not Luther's vocabulary in the original. Should atonement therefore be banished from our vocabulary for Luther? No. My solution to the terminology problem has been to see that "Luther's theology of atonement" is similar to other phrases we use to encompass several parts of Luther's thought, such as his sacramental theology, forensic [and sanative] justification, his doctrine of the two kingdoms, and his hermeneutics. Atonement for Luther serves as an important interpretative tool for packaging many genuine Luther articles such as reconciliation, expiation, cross, *fröhlicher Wechsel*, redemption, sacrament and example, justification, and, yes, salvation. To have a more exact understanding of Luther on atonement one needs to be grounded in Luther's actual usage of the "genuine articles." This essay seeks to understand some of those "genuine articles" as a way of reconfiguring Luther on atonement, articles that come from my reading of Luther in the light of medieval theology.

Hence, the several items that atonement embraces in Luther include the method of *enarratio*, joyous exchange, theology of testament, theology of the cross, theology of the worm and the devil, and sacrament and example. These are the many pieces to the picture of Luther on atonement.

Aulén seems to have difficulty specifying the meaning of atonement by claiming that for Luther atonement equals salvation and salvation equals atonement—that atonement

⁵*Concordia Triglotta: die symbolischen Bücher der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, deutsch-lateinisch-englisch* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921).

⁶*The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, translated by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959).

and justification are the same thing.⁷ In Aulén's chapter on the New Testament, atonement is not used in translating Scripture; words that do appear are propitiation, payment, ransom, redemption, reconciliation.

Aulén has done us the service of providing a panoramic view of atonement in the Christian tradition, using the Ludensian method of motif-research. The disservice of this method is that it is abstract typology. Aulén speaks of atonement theories: idea, type, and motif. Luther did not have time for theories; he worked as a theologian on the death-resurrection of Christ to give God glory and preserve the mysteries of the faith. Luther trusted only biblical truths.

Enarratio

Enarratio means to explain and expound in detail. Luther preoccupied himself with the Epistle to the Galatians and published throughout his life what are called in Latin and English "commentaries" on that book. Luther himself did not consider his work to be a commentary. He said that his work "is not so much a commentary as a testimony of my faith in Christ." Rather, Luther identified the genre of Erasmus's Greek and Latin New Testament, the *Novum instrumentum* of 1516, as a commentary (and he did so in a sarcastic way).

The term that Luther used to describe his publications on Galatians was "enarrare" or "enarratio." Committed to kindling interest in Pauline theology, Luther set out to "enarrate" Pauline theology—to set forth in detail Paul's theology in the public arena. "Narrate" (*narratio*) means to tell the story. "Enarrate" (*enarratio*), which is not an English word, means to take the message out and to apply it, that is, to tell the story in public. The story concerns the "one true faith in Christ alone." In the Preface of 1535, to "enarrate the Epistle" means to go public against the devil.

⁷Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 135, 167.

To tell Paul's story in public is not to do something new, but rather to do something very old: to fight the devil with the doctrine of "solid faith." From his lectures of 1516 to the printing of 1535, Luther's purpose with Galatians was to go public with the "faith of Christ." Hardly an academic exercise, Luther views this as the battle of life against death. It means to defend the faith against the pseudo-prophets and pseudo-apostles, the false teachers, who both Paul and Luther were convinced return all too quickly to the very centers of faith. To make public the faith—the Gospel of Christ—will inevitably stir up demonic forces and cause eschatological conflict.

In the Large Galatians, after describing the complete death and victory over sin, Luther says that the doctrine of Christian righteousness is too great to describe or understand.⁸ This leads to my claim that any theory of the atonement explains away one of the mysteries of the faith. How Christ took the place of the murderer and adulterer, and all the sins of mankind, and made satisfaction by his blood is not open to theorizing but to praise. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).⁹ Any theorizing takes away the mystery.

Working on the atonement has led me to conclude that, in spite of theories prevalent in Luther's day, the reconciling work of atonement is one of those precious mysteries that escapes theory. Atonement is a mystery rather than a theory developed by reason. It is not clear to the eye of reason how the blood of a Nazarene shed on a cursed tree between two criminals one Friday afternoon in Jerusalem could redeem the sins of humankind the world over. The eye of faith sees my sins dying in the work of the one who has taken my place in the incarnation.

Much of the Luther on atonement research and writing has been spent on Luther and Anselm. My own angle on Anselm and Luther is to remember the rule for doctrinal development

⁸ *LW* 26:280.

⁹ *LW* 26:277, 280.

in the Middle Ages, namely, *potuit*, *deceit*, *fecit*. Concerning a doctrinal matter, the medieval theologian asks (1) is it possible (*potuit*); if yes, then (2) is it becoming of God (*deceit*); if yes, the conclusion is (3) it happened (*fecit*). Anselm worked out his view of atonement on the level of *deceo*, what is fitting or becoming of God, all in the framework of faith seeking understanding. Luther, however, worked on the level of *fecit*: what happened. Without analyzing the reasons (fittingness) for God's actions, Luther wants to get the message out (*enarratio*).

If there has been anything of a theological breakthrough for this author in this project on atonement, it is seeing the difference between the dynamic of doctrinal development in the Middle Ages (and continuing in the modern Roman Catholic Church) and Luther's approach to theology. The method of faith seeking understanding in the Middle Ages employed reason in speculating about what is possible and fitting for God to have done. For Luther, the method of *enarratio* meant getting the message out into the public sphere, the message of what God has in fact done in Christ. What God could have done, however beautiful and fitting, was theology of glory for Luther, based on reason. The medieval approach kept theology and doctrine an in-house affair. For Luther theology meant confession of faith, proclamation, profession in public, "the testimony of my faith in Christ."

Der fröhlicher Wechsel

For some, Luther's "doctrine of atonement" is summarized in the phrase "the joyous exchange." Burnell Eckardt, in his insightful book on Anselm and Luther, says: "*fröhlicher Wechsel* occurs only by imputation; it may in fact be termed Luther's version of the vicarious satisfaction."¹⁰

¹⁰Burnell Eckardt, *Anselm and Luther on the Atonement: Was It "Necessary"?* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992).

According to Ulrich Asendorf, the incarnation is the joyous exchange (*fröhlicher Wechsel*) of our flesh and Christ's.¹¹ We are born of Mary; Christ's birth is our birth; Mary is our mother, Christ our brother, God our father.¹² In the Lord's Supper in faith we are in a joyous exchange with Christ in that we become one with him.¹³ Ultimately, Asendorf argues that the joyous exchange leads in the direction of theosis.¹⁴

The joyous exchange that is seen as a prominent feature of Luther's theology has its precedent in Staupitz, from Augustine. Augustine says in his sermons that the property of man is sin, untruth, and death, but the property of God is goodness, truth, and life. "The sinner with his property possesses God and is possessed by him. . . . What is properly God's (namely, life) becomes man's; and what is proper to human nature (namely, death) becomes God's."¹⁵ Staupitz and Luther use this *commercium admirabile* in Augustine's sermons and add to it both a marriage metaphor and the exchange of sin and righteousness.

Luther used the bridal imagery to convey the idea of common property: the bridegroom turns over to the bride all of his property just as God does to man. Luther said that it would be a fragile love if the groom had not turned over to his bride his keys and the power over wine, bread, and everything else in the house. Luther extended the idea of common property to the idea of the holy exchange (*fröhlicher Wechsel, admirabile/sacrum commercium*).

In his *Lectures on 1 John* (1:3) regarding 2 Peter 1:4, Luther remarks that we are partakers of the divine nature because we

¹¹Ulrich Asendorf, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers nach seinen Predigten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988).

¹²Asendorf, *Theologie Martin Luthers*, 80, 88.

¹³Asendorf, *Theologie Martin Luthers*, 296.

¹⁴Asendorf, *Theologie Martin Luthers*, 423.

¹⁵David C. Steinmetz, *Luther and Staupitz: An Essay in the Intellectual Origins of the Protestant Reformation*, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies, volume four (Durham: Duke University Press, 1980), 29.

have all the good things God has. The Father and Son have life, truth, and eternal salvation. "On our side there are nothing but sins. We share His good things; he shares our wretchedness. I believe in Christ. Therefore my sin is in Christ."¹⁶

In his work *On Two Kinds of Righteousness*, where he treats 2 Peter 1:4 and several other texts, Luther says God has granted us very great and precious gifts in Christ. Bride and bridegroom have all things in common. Christ and the Church are one spirit. Through faith in Christ, his righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that he has becomes ours; rather, he himself becomes ours. He swallows up all our sins in a moment for it is impossible that sin should exist in Christ.¹⁷

The secret of the divine grace for the sinner is that through a wonderful exchange our sins are no longer ours but Christ's, and the righteousness of Christ is not his but ours.¹⁸

Theology of Testament

Luther's theology of testament, the testament of Christ, embraces five parts. Testament was the means for theologizing about the Christian faith for Luther. He says the promise was given to Abraham "through the medium of testament" (*per modum testamenti*).¹⁹ Testament is the message as well as the means, "and so that little word testament is a short summary

¹⁶ LW 30:225.

¹⁷ LW 31:297-98.

¹⁸ On Psalm 22:1-2, *Operationes in Psalmos* (W² 4:1241.41). Other texts on *admirabile commercium*: Christ has *admirabile commercium* with creatures (WA 5:253,10-11). Christ has *admirabili commertio* with us sinners. Our sins are exchanged for Christ's righteousness. Bride/bridegroom become one flesh (WA 5:608.5-22). LW 26:284 "fortunate exchange" equals *feliciter commutans* (WA 40, I:443,23); *commutans* means total exchange, to alter wholly, change entirely, replace, substitute.

¹⁹ *Divi Pauli apostoli ad Galathas epistola* (1516), WA 57, II:24.9-10.

of all God's wonders and grace fulfilled in Christ."²⁰ The "whole Gospel" is summarized in the testament of Christ.²¹

The first element in testament is the promise initiated by God from the beginning. "It must happen in this manner . . . that God alone without any entreaty or desire of man must first come and give him a promise." The promise is "the beginning, the foundation, the rock."²² "God is the testator for it is he himself who promises and bequeaths."²³ The testament is the promise and the promise is in both books; "all the fathers in the Old Testament together with all the holy prophets have the same faith and Gospel as we have," because "it is all the one truth of the promise."²⁴ For Luther there is no book in the Bible which does not contain both law and promise.²⁵ The testament is eternal. Some would say that the prophets and the New Testament add something to the books of Moses. "No," said Luther regarding all books of the Bible, "throughout them all there is one and the same teaching and thought."²⁶ In every promise, there is a word and a sign just as notaries affix their seal or mark to make a will binding and authentic.²⁷ The signs were rainbow, circumcision, rain on the ground; in baptism—water, and in the Lord's Supper—bread and wine. "The words are the divine vow, promise, and testament. The sacred signs are the sacraments. Now as the testament is more

²⁰ *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament* (1520), WA 6:357.25-27; LW35:84.

²¹ *Ein Sermon*, WA 6:374.3-9. Hermeneutically for Luther, the New Testament illumines the Old Testament (*Evangelium in der Christmesse*, Luk. 2,1-14 [1522], WA 10,I,1:79-84; one may compare *Ein klein Unterricht was man in den Evangeliiis suchen und gewarten soll* [1522], WA 10,I,1:14.16-15.9). "The books of Moses and the prophets are also the Gospel" (*Epistel S. Petri gepredigt* [1523], WA 12:275.5) for the New Testament is the light of the Old Testament. The Old Testament is the fountain of the new, the new is the light of the old (WA Tr 5:378.25-26, #5841).

²² *Ein Sermon*, WA 6:356.3-8; LW35:82.

²³ *Ad Galatas* (1519), WA 2:519.5; LW27:264.

²⁴ *Das Magnificat* (1521), WA 7:600.1-9; LW7:354.

²⁵ *Adventspostille* (1522) WA 10,I,2:159.7-8; one may compare *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament*, WA 6:356-57.

²⁶ *Von Menschenlehre zu meiden* (1522), WA 10,II:73.7-18; LW35:132.

²⁷ *Ein Sermon*, WA 6:358.35-359.3.

important than the sacrament so the words are much more important than the signs.”²⁸

The second element in testament is Luther’s theology of Word. The Word is the living eternal promise of the testament of Christ. The Gospel of Christ is not a writing but a word of mouth.²⁹

This report and encouraging tidings, or evangelical and divine news, is also called the New Testament. For it is a testament when a dying man bequeaths his property after his death to his legally defined heirs. And Christ, before his death, commanded and ordained that his Gospel be preached after his death in all the world.³⁰

The New Testament is a living Word. Consequently for Luther, the Church is a “mouth house” not a “pen house.”³¹ Luther often bemoaned the fact that we have the New Testament in written form because it is primarily proclamation to be sung loudly in German.

The testament is the Word of Christ, “this is my body. In like manner he says over the cup ‘take it and all of you drink of it; this is the new, everlasting testament in my blood.’ In proof and evidence of this, he left his own body and blood under bread and wine, instead of letter and seal.”³² Everything depends on the words of Christ’s testament, says Luther.

You would have to spend a long time polishing your shoes, preening and primping to obtain an inheritance, if you had no letter and seal with which you could prove your right to it. But if you have a letter and seal, and believe, desire, and seek it, it must be given to you even though you were scaly, scabby, stinking and most filthy. So if you would receive this sacrament and testament

²⁸ *Ein Sermon*, WA 6:363.4-7; LW35:91.

²⁹ *Ein klein Unterricht*, WA 10,I,1:17.4-11.

³⁰ *Vorrede auf das Neue Testament* (1522), WA DB 6:4.12-17; LW35:358.

³¹ *Adventspostille* (1522), WA 10,I,2:35.1-2; 48.5.

³² *Von den guten Werken* (1520), WA 6:230.10-25; LW44:55-56.

worthily, see to it that you give emphasis to these living words of Christ.³³

The Word is the promise, the Word is the testament, the Word is Christ. Christ's testament is the Lord's Supper. "Let this stand therefore, as our first and infallible proposition, the mass or sacrament of the altar is Christ's testament."³⁴

Now, says Luther, "you have the testator, the testament, the substance of the testament, and those for whom it was made. Now it remains that it be ratified . . . that is, made valid through the death of Christ."³⁵ Luther often cited Hebrews 9:16: "'for where there is a testament, the death of the testator must of necessity occur.' Now God made a testament; therefore, it was necessary that he should die, but God could not die unless he became man, thus, the incarnation and the death of Christ are both comprehended most concisely in this one word, 'testament.'"³⁶ Testament is not about to be altered or recalled by the living. It is an irrevocable will of one about to die. The cross, then, is in the context of the promise of the testament "that God would become man, and die and rise again in order that his Word in which he promises such a testament might be fulfilled and confirmed."³⁷

The third part of Luther's theology of testament is the cross. Because for many Luther's entire theology is a theology of the cross, we will return to that in Part Four.

The fourth aspect of Luther's theology of testament is grace. Grace for Luther is unilateral gift. One of the primary functions of testament is that it is unilateral, the testator makes out his will without the recipient having to do anything to deserve the inheritance. Testament, at least God's way, is totally gratuitous. The heir in no way merits the inheritance.

³³ *Ein Sermon*, WA 6:360.29-361.9; LW 35:88.

³⁴ *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium* (1520), WA 6:513.14-15; LW 36:37.

³⁵ *Ad Galatas* (1519), WA 2:519.38-520.6; LW 27:265.

³⁶ *De captivitate Babylonica*, WA 6:514.6-10; LW 36:38.

³⁷ *Ein Sermon*, WA 6:357.22-24; LW 35:84.

Testament for Luther stands in contrast with covenant. Often Luther uses covenant as a synonym for testament and understands it as unilateral gift. The covenant, in late medieval covenant theology and elsewhere, is a bilateral, two-way pact, bond or agreement. The various covenant theologies in the later Middle Ages were at least semi- if not fully pelagian, because they called for some human action as necessary part of the pact. This model of covenant does not call for a death. The grace of the unilateral testament is the cross and resurrection. The unilateral act of grace proves that God's promise is true. The cross is final proof that God's testament is valid. The resurrection completes God's action. For Luther, then, grace is God's self-authenticating Word that accomplishes its purpose without requiring any act on our part.

The fifth aspect of testament is faith or trust in the inheritance. One receives faith through the Word accomplishing its purpose. Faith is a gift of grace. Trust is confidence that Christ not only died for the sins of mankind but that he died for me. Trust is intimately bound up with Luther's notion of the certitude of salvation. The Christian has an absolute ground of the certainty of his salvation because his salvation is in Christ—Christ for us and for me. If salvation were dependent on something that I were to do—free will, free reason, free whatever—then Luther in no way can have any confidence. Confidence rests in Christ alone.

Luther's theology of testament is soteriological, having to do with salvation. Luther sometimes, like other medieval theologians, discusses testament in terms of the books of the Old and New Testament and the great eras of divine providence covered by both books. Luther's principle interest in the category of testament, however, is not in terms of books or eras but in terms of soteriology. Luther was quite similar to Saint Augustine in this regard in his understanding of testament as way of salvation, though Luther's doctrine of salvation is different from Augustine's. Luther and Augustine see Old and New Testament as old and new ways of salvation, both ways being present in both books and eras. When Luther

and Augustine discussed old and new, they often meant old man/new man, letter/spirit, flesh/spirit. The man of faith is a New Testament man; that is, for Luther, he has received the testament of Christ in faith and trust because the testament of God is eternal and his Word eternally effective. Those who lived during the era of Old Testament but believed and trusted in the promise in faith belong to the New Testament. Luther does not conceive of salvation in terms of progressive transformation as did Augustine, but in terms of the ever present Word of God, faith, and inheritance, all grounded in the death of Christ. The full force of God's testament is present at every point in time. Those who respond in trust belong to the New Testament of Christ.

The New Testament person is at the same time both totally just in Christ and totally sinful in himself, simultaneously and totally sinner and saint. That is, the human situation never changes, and the divine situation never changes. We cannot build a staircase to heaven, we are totally dependent on the effectiveness of the divine testament for our salvation. Another way of saying this is that just as there are both Old and New Testaments, both old and new men, so also the man of faith himself is both old and new at the same time—old in himself, new in Christ, totally, simultaneously, and continuously (Augustine could not say any of this). The Christian, at whatever point in time and space, is sinful and saved. Luther says that just as Christ on the cross is suspended between heaven and earth so the Christian lives between the Old and New Testament, totally old, totally new, waiting for final glory when he will be totally and finally new. A Christian is simultaneously sinful and saved or, put another way, a Christian is simultaneously Old Testament and New Testament.

Theology of the Cross

The theology of the cross has an anti-speculative force to it that is directed against a theology of glory. The theology of the cross is contextual, working within the framework of what God, in fact, did in Christ on the cross. It is not speculative,

looking into the infinite number of possibilities available to divine power. Remember Luther's difference with his predecessors in his interest to concentrate on what God has done in order to get the message out (*enarratio*), whereas they speculated about the fittingness of what God could do. Rather than using philosophical terms, Luther talks about the wounds of Christ on the cross and about Christ as a worm on the cross, emphasizing the total humiliation of the God-man. The humiliation of the cross is God's total identification with the human situation in order to redeem that situation so that we can live by faith. The meaning and effect of the cross is a continual reality for all of God's faithful people in all times and places; the faithful of all ages live at the foot of the cross. The cross is the Word historicized making credible God's eternal promises.

Luther speaks of the death of Christ as the alien work of God through the devil, the lord of death. Death is used to destroy the lord of death. Life wrought through death is closed to reason and open only to faith. The alien deed is indirect revelation. God is *not* known through the works of creation or his invisible attributes (for example, immutability). He is known through suffering and the cross. Speculation as a way to God is eliminated. God revealed himself in the hiddenness of this One who is crucified. Life is the proper work of God. God uses the devil's proper work to destroy the devil through his own work of the death of Christ.

He destroyed the devil, not by a work of God but by a work of the devil himself. For this is the most glorious kind of victory, namely, to pierce the adversary with his own weapon and to slay him with his own sword, as we sing: "He fell prostrate on his own darts." For in this way God promotes and completes His work by means of an alien deed, and by His wonderful wisdom He compels the devil to work through death nothing else than life, so that in this way, while he acts most of all against the work of God, he acts for the work of God and against his own work with his own deed. For thus he worked death in

Christ, but Christ completely swallowed up death in Himself through the immortality of His divinity and rose again in glory.³⁸

Christ became the death of death.

The key document where Luther develops his theology of the cross is the *Heidelberg Disputation* of 1518.³⁹ The *Heidelberg Disputation* is key for two reasons: (1) It is Luther's explanation to his fellow Augustinian brothers of his key ideas with regard to sin, free will, and grace—topics that had been debated in his *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* the previous year. (2) It is the key text in all of Luther's writings for his theology of the cross.

That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible back sides of God seen through suffering and cross. A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.⁴⁰

Luther's explanation of Thesis 19, with reference to Romans 1:20 ("His invisible being can be seen so that it is perceived in his works") is: "This is apparent in the example of those who were 'theologians' and still were called fools by the apostle in Romans 1."⁴¹ So, those theologians who seek to know God by speculating through the work of their reason into the invisible things of God clearly perceived in those things that have happened are fools. That is what Luther has said so far, but then typical Luther, if one really wants to know what these invisible things are of God, "the invisible things of God are virtue, godliness, wisdom, justice, goodness, and so forth. The recognition of all these things does not make one worthy or

³⁸ *Lectures on Hebrews*, LW 29:135.

³⁹ LW 31:40.

⁴⁰ LW 31:40.

⁴¹ LW 31:52.

wise."⁴² So a theologian of glory speculates into the invisible things of God as though they were perceptible in the things that have actually happened.

Now a theologian of the cross—the subject of Thesis 20—is different. A theologian of the cross looks at what is visible. What is visible is suffering and cross, and suffering and cross are the back parts of God (*posteriora dei*). The visible things turn out to be the back side of God. God is revealed on the cross, and what we see on the cross is the back side. We do not see, as Moses could not see, God face to face. A theologian of the cross is the only legitimate type of theologian; the theologian of glory is only a theologian in name and is actually a fool. The theologian of the cross comprehends the visible and back sides of God seen through suffering and cross.

The theologian of glory discussed in Thesis 19 seeks a knowledge of God and his attributes, or the invisible things of God, by perceiving and understanding the things that have actually happened. In other words, the theologian of glory comes to a knowledge of God through God's works. He does this by his own works, that is, by his intellectual activity. Luther believes that the powers of reason are contaminated. Just as in morality man misuses the law and appropriates goodness to his works, so in the intellectual sphere he assumes the knowledge of God to be his work. In contrast to the theologian of glory, the theologian of the cross seeks knowledge of God in suffering. Suffering here has a twofold meaning: the suffering of God in Christ and the suffering of the Christian united with Christ. The main point is that knowledge comes in and through suffering rather than in and through works, and this is the key to the theology of the cross in Heidelberg 19 and following. Theology of glory equals works of reason, theology of the cross equals suffering. Furthermore, visible things are perceived rather than invisible things understood. What is perceived is the back side of God.

⁴²LW31:52.

Thus, God is hidden in the revelation, or God reveals himself through concealment. He is concealed because his face is not turned towards us. His brilliance and glory are hidden in their opposites, that is, in suffering, weakness, foolishness, and the cross. Such knowledge cannot be misused by humans as knowledge from works is.

Heidelberg Thesis 21 shows Luther to be an “is-theologian.” The “is-theologian” must get the message out as to what the situation is. The theologian of the cross knows that knowledge of God is found only through suffering and the cross. To find the cross and Christ is to find God hidden in suffering. The theologian of glory gets things reversed and in his confusion fails to find reality. As Luther says in Thesis 21, “A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. The theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.” The “isness” of the situation is the “isness” of the human situation and the “isness” of the divine situation. Through his own experience and through his own theology, Luther is absolutely convinced that human nature is rotten to the core, that God is God, that God is quite capable of being God, and that God has bridged the gap between mankind and himself in Christ. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is. In his explanation to this thesis, Luther says, “This is clear, he who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering.” The way to know God, is to know the God in Christ who is visibly showing his back sides through suffering and cross.

The cross meant suffering and humiliation for Luther, the wounds of Christ, the blood of Christ, Christ as worm on the cross. Christ as worm meant total humiliation. “I am worm and no man” (Psalm 22:6), said Christ on the cross according to Luther. We find him dying a shameful death, says Luther, which is his theology of the worm and the devil.

Christ as Worm on the Cross

The texts from Luther for this part range from 1517 well into the later Luther. The first is from his Hebrews lectures (1517-18). Hebrews 2:7 says, “thou didst make him a little lower than

the angels." The medievals debated as to who the "him" is in this text and what the author means by "a little lower." Luther first discounts those who understood "him" to be human nature, a little lower than the angels in dignity. Next Luther opposes those who understand "him" to be Christ, which is on the right track, but lacks an adequate Christology. He says,

Others understand this verse to refer to Christ as being lower than the angels, not according to his soul but according to his body which is capable of suffering. But even this interpretation is not precise enough since he was not only made lower than the angels but as he himself says: 'I am worm and not a man' (Ps. 22:6).⁴³

Being made "lower than the angels" meant for Luther the time of total humiliation on the cross and between the cross and resurrection. For three days when forsaken and deserted by God "Thou didst hand him over into the hands of sinners."⁴⁴ The meaning of Christ as worm on the cross carries the connotations of Christ being abject, the object of contempt, forsaken, nauseating, abominable, rotten stench, scandal, offensive or, simply, rotting worm.⁴⁵

The prophets have a special way of speaking but they mean exactly what the apostles preach for both have said much about the suffering and glory of God and of those who believe in him. Thus, David says of Christ in Psalm 22:6, 'I am a worm and no man.' With these words he shows the depth of his abject humiliation in his suffering.⁴⁶

Christ as worm refers to "the mode of his passion as pure man."⁴⁷ The state of pure man (*purus homo*) is that we are a bag of worms. The first enemy that tempts the Christian away

⁴³ WA 57,III:117.4-10; LW 29:126.

⁴⁴ WA 57,III:119.1-5; LW 29:127.

⁴⁵ *Operationes in Psalmos*, WA 5:614.4-24.

⁴⁶ *Epistel S. Petri gepredigt und ausgelegt* (1522), WA 12:279.23-27; LW 30:24.

⁴⁷ *Operationes in Psalmos*, WA 5:614.8-9.

from the Word of God and faith is “our own flesh,” a rotten old bag of worms hanging heavy around our neck.⁴⁸ “We are nothing other than filth, corruption and worms.” In death, the flesh turns to dust, and the worms consume it. Faith looks beyond death and the consumption by worms and believes that the body will rise.⁴⁹ “For thus it has pleased God to raise up from worms, from corruption, from the earth which is totally putrid and full of stench a body more beautiful than any flower, than balsam, than the sun itself and the stars.”⁵⁰ The inheritance for the worm of faith is eternal life.⁵¹

Christ destroyed the devil’s tyranny over death. God chose not to use heavenly muscle, such as Gabriel, Michael and the others, but

He degrades himself so profoundly and becomes a man, yes, even degrades himself below all men, as it is written in Psalm 22, “I am a worm and no man, scorned by men and despised by the people.” In such physical weakness and poverty, he attacks the enemy, lets himself be put on the cross and killed, and by his cross in death, he destroys the enemy and the avenger.⁵²

How is it that a worm on a cross destroys the enemy’s tyranny over death? The force of the image of worm is illumined by an examination of some early Christian literature. First Clement (16:15) uses Psalm 22:6 to describe the humiliation of Christ and later (25:3) the worm is used as a resurrection symbol. The worm comes forth from the decaying flesh of the Phoenix bird. The resurrection of the mythical Phoenix is used as an illustration of the Christian doctrine of resurrection, “now from the corruption of its flesh there

⁴⁸ *Das fünfte, sechste und siebente Kapitel Matthaei gepredigt und ausgelegt* (1532), WA 32:308.13-14; 489:34-38; LW 12:105, 230; LW 24:44.

⁴⁹ *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-45), WA 43:318.22-23; 303.36-304.6.

⁵⁰ *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-45), WA 43:272.37-39; LW 4:190.

⁵¹ *Das 16. Kapitel S. Johannes gepredigt und ausgelegt* (1537), WA 46:54.36-55.8.

⁵² *Der 8. Psalm Davids, gepredigt und ausgelegt* (1537), WA 45:220.14-22; LW 12:110.

springs a worm which is nourished by the juices of the dead bird and puts forth wing." In Origen, the worm as Christ's humanity is used as bait to catch the devil and his angels.⁵³ In Cyril of Jerusalem, new life comes from worms as evidenced by the bees and the birds. The transformation of the Phoenix from a worm is proof of Christ's resurrection.⁵⁴ In Gregory of Nyssa, the gluttonous fish is lured by the flesh of Christ as bait. The divinity of Christ is the hook.⁵⁵ Luther refers to Gregory's notion of how God took a sharp fishhook, put an angle worm on it and threw it into the sea.⁵⁶ The worm is the humanity of Christ, the hook the divinity. On the hook, the worm is *gebunden*, namely, the humanity. The devil says, "should I not swallow the little worm?" He did not see the hook.⁵⁷

For Luther, the testator on the cross is pure man, a worm. The testator is also the one who made the promise of the eternal inheritance. "The humanity did not conquer sin and death, but the hook that was concealed under the worm at which the devil struck conquered and devoured the devil who was attempting to devour the worm."⁵⁸

The time frame for the worm action, described by Aulén as gross imagery, is primarily the descent into hell. It can also, however, refer to the whole incarnation.⁵⁹ God in the incarnation acts like a fisherman, with hook and worm. The devil finds him like "a worm and no man" and swallows him up. But this is to him as food which he cannot digest. For Christ sticks in his gills, and he must spew him out again, as the whale the prophet Jonah, and even as he chews him the devil chokes himself and is slain, and is taken captive by Christ.

⁵³ *Selecta in Ps.* 21.7, Migne, *Patrologia Graeco-Latina* 12:1254C.

⁵⁴ *Catechesis* 18.8, Migne, *Patrologia Graeco-Latina* 33:1026-27.

⁵⁵ *Oratio Catechetica* 24, Migne, *Patrologia Graeco-Latina* 45:66A.

⁵⁶ Luther likely means Gregory the Great; one may see *Moralium in Job*, lib. 33, Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 76:682C,D.

⁵⁷ Luther, *Predigt am Ostersonntag* (1530), *WA* 32:41.12-26.

⁵⁸ *Ad Galatas* (1531/35), *LW* 26:267; *WA* 40:I:417.31-33.

⁵⁹ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, "grossest" symbol, 119.

For Luther, thinking of Heidelberg Thesis 21, the theologian of the cross tells it like it actually is. God is there in Christ, Christ is there on the cross. In the Lord's Supper, Christ is there: we receive the inheritance, the forgiveness of sins. Inheritance is received by the worm of faith. The beauty of the "is" is that that is the way it is—in the life of faith there is no ought, must, do, wait and see. A man of faith can only have faith because Christ has totally redeemed our human situation in all its worminess. Christ as worm, less than man, decimates the deadly forces and we are totally victorious—from worm to glory; and with Luther's theology of revelation in hiddenness, the glory is in the worminess. The contradictions exist in tension. The tensions are not resolved. In cross, in suffering, in worm is Christ.

Sacrament and Example

Christ's death is a sacrament for dying to sin and walking a new life every day of our lives. Christ's death and resurrection is also an example for us to die confidently since he is not only our companion and leader, he carries us over to the other side.

In his 1517 *Lectures on Hebrews*, Luther speaks of Christ's death as a sacrament and an example (*sacramentum et exemplum*). It comes up in the context of Luther's comments on Hebrews 10:19, 22: "therefore, brethren since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near with a true heart." These words move Luther to deal with the work of Christ in terms of sacrament and example. Luther began his interpretation by saying that "the apostle wants us to imitate Christ who suffered and by dying passed over to the glory of the Father."⁶⁰ The passion and resurrection of Christ is "the sacrament for imitating Christ," a sacrament "for the mortification of concupiscence" and "for our new life." Luther then says, "Almost all of Paul's epistles are full of this mystical and exemplary suffering of Christ."⁶¹

⁶⁰ WA 57,III:222.12-14; LW 29:225.

⁶¹ WA 57,III:222.23-223.5; LW 29:225.

The passion of Christ, for Luther, is "exemplary" in a twofold way. Referring to St. Augustine, Luther says, "We pass over in flesh and spirit, but Christ in flesh alone. Therefore, the passing over of Christ's flesh is at the same time an example of the passing over of our flesh (for we will be like him) and a sacrament for the passing over of our spirit."⁶² The reference to Augustine made in the lectures on the Hebrews and the earlier lectures on Romans and Galatians shows that the sacrament of Christ's passion and resurrection is the work of Christ for our salvation.⁶³ We are called to imitate Christ's sacrament by dying to sin and walking a new way with Christ [first example]. Christ's death and resurrection is also an example for man to die physically in order to be reunited with Christ in heaven.

In the light of earlier medieval exegesis of this verse, the conclusion that Luther draws from his discussion of sacrament and example is striking. For Luther, because of the sacrament and example of Christ, "we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19). Medieval interpretations ranged from one text that argued that we have confidence because the realities of the New Testament are greater than the types of the Old Testament. Another interpretation emphasized that our certainty comes from the fact that Christ was first to enter. For another, Christ is an infallible leader. For another, Christ prepared and demonstrated, opened, and initiated the way for us to enter.⁶⁴

For Luther, the example of Christ is that he "passed over before everyone else and leveled the rough road in order to elicit our confidence." However, Christ does more than show us the way, "he also holds out his hand for those who are following." Our confidence rests in the fact that "Christ alone is not only our companion on the way but also our leader, and

⁶² WA 57,III:223.11-14; LW 29:225 citing *De Trinitate* IV.3.5-6.

⁶³ WA 56:320.11-16; LW 25:308; WA 57,II:54.4-9.

⁶⁴ Kenneth Hagen, *A Theology of Testament in the Young Luther: The Lectures on Hebrews*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, volume 12 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 115.

not only our leader but also our helper, in fact, he carries us over.”⁶⁵ Christ as example, therefore, shows us how to die confidently, and as sacrament makes it possible for us to do so.

In the light of medieval exegesis, the significance of Luther’s interpretation of Hebrews 10:19 is that “we have confidence to enter the sanctuary” not because Christ’s testament is greater than the old but because of Christ alone, his sacrament and example. Furthermore, our confidence arises from the fact that Christ not only opened the way, but he also carries us over.

For Luther, then, the only way to God is by way of faith in the lowly humanity of Christ seen totally humiliated on the cross. Christ became the most abject of men in his passion and death. This humanity is the holy ladder of ascent to God. Luther concentrates on Christ on the cross by way of emphasizing that our righteousness is effected by Christ’s righteousness and our penance by Christ’s purgation. It is Christ who accomplishes salvation in us.

Conclusion

This paper has chosen not to focus on themes that are in Anselm and Luther, themes commonly associated with atonement, such as payment for sin, substitution, satisfaction, redemption by blood. Rather it has attempted to reconfigure Luther on atonement. Being convinced that atonement is a broad category that encompasses many genuine Luther items, it suggested several aspects to God’s work of atonement, for example, the alien work of God through the devil, the back side of God, Christ as worm, the curse of Christ as sin, in addition to the main themes of the method of *enarratio*, joyous exchange, theology of testament, theology of the cross, theology of the worm and the devil, sacrament and example. The contextual, nonspeculative character of Luther’s theology runs through much of the foregoing, namely, the *fecit*, the cross, and Luther’s “is-theology.” The certitude of salvation rests on the conviction that the testament of Christ is for me.

⁶⁵ WA 57,III:223.24-224.10; LW 29:226.

In all fairness to medieval theology, scholastic speculation was done from the posture of faith seeking understanding; reason was used in the genre of approbation, convincing only to those already convinced. And yet for many critics of scholastic theology—Luther among them—the speculative questions did not help explain basic biblical truths. The use of dialectic, question, reason, and doubt had a life of its own; theology was for theologians. Theology had become divorced from the study of Scripture.

For Luther, theology is in service of the Church; its purpose is to get the message of the truth of Christ out into the public sphere. Theology must protect the mysteries of the faith and speak out against the false prophets. Question, reason, debate were appropriate for the training of young theologians in the university; the weekly Friday afternoon disputations were reintroduced into the curriculum at Wittenberg. The main curriculum, however, as well as the whole purpose of theology under Luther's leadership was to teach, serve, and guide the faithful, especially the weak in Christ.

A Note on the 450th Anniversary of the Death of Martin Luther (February 18, 1996)

The importance of Luther for our time, as I see it, is his clear perception and practice of theology—in the tradition of *enarratio* and the discipline of the sacred page. Often Luther is brought into the contemporary situation to bolster a current agenda (which the history of Luther research bears out). The usefulness of Luther for me is his insight into the task of theology, a discipline with a tradition and an agenda sufficient unto itself. In recent times, studies of theology *and*, or theology *as*, or *adjectival* theology have become popular. In other words, in some circles theology has become copulative, adverbial, and adjectival: theology *and* (society), theology *as* (history), and (*feminist*) theology.⁶⁶ Luther practiced theology *as* theology.

⁶⁶A Harvard Professor said in the early 1960s that when theology has to be qualified with an *and*, *as*, or *adjective*, it has lost its discipline.

In the tradition that Luther worked, theology had (and has) more than enough to do to keep track of the demands of the sacred page, the public, and the demonic. The thesis here is that theology has a discipline, an identity, and a long history that stretches back into Scripture itself. Its starting and ending point is God. It is important to me that other disciplines do not worry about the reality of the Logos present in the flesh, the reality of Christ Jesus present at the table, the forgiveness of sins, and the meaning of redemption, among others. It is important that theology be a disciplined study of God and that Scripture, in the name of consistency, be approached for what it was and is.

Above all else, I have come to see that the discipline of theology is characterized by uniqueness, sufficiency, and finality. Its uniqueness consists in its focus on God and his sacred page. Its sufficiency lies in its tasks to protect the mysteries of God and to ward off the pseudo-apostles; it is best equipped to accomplish these tasks by reliance on the resources deep within the discipline and not by liaisons with other disciplines. Its finality consists in its eschatological dimension. In the grammar of Scripture, there is a finality to *eschaton*, which the Latin Vulgate translates “in the newest days.” The eschatological referent of theology differentiates it perhaps most clearly from philosophy, history, and psychology.

The eschatological referent was the guiding light behind the work of two doctors of the Church, Dr. Martin Luther and Dr. Robert Preus. In his Preface to the Burial Hymns, Luther writes:

We Christians, who have been redeemed . . . by the dear blood of the Son of God should by faith train and accustom ourselves to despise death and to regard it as a deep, strong, and sweet sleep, to regard the coffin as nothing but paradise and the bosom of our Lord Christ, and the grave as nothing but a soft couch or sofa, which

it really is in the sight of God; for He says, John 11, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep."⁶⁷

⁶⁷"Preface to the Burial Hymns," *LW* 53:326.

Luther and the Priesthood of All Believers

Norman Nagel

Was there a “priesthood of all believers” before there was a Luther? Did he invent it, or did he name it? Did he ever in fact use this expression? Where does it come from? These are the sorts of questions this paper addresses.

1 Peter 2 has “a holy priesthood” and “a royal priesthood” within a rich collection of complementary terms. This priesthood is from the covenanting text, Exodus 19:5-6. The same priesthood is called both holy and royal. Only here is this said, and its only source is Exodus 19 – בְּרִית. The Lord speaks, his people hear Moses’ voice (his voice), and they say back to him what he has said to them: homology, confession, *coram Deo*.

“You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Kingdom is where a king is king – that can only be the Lord. Only because of him does what is going on here occur, and he does what he does with his words (הַדְּבָרִים, 19:6). Among those words are בְּרִית בְּהוֹיִם in parallel with גּוֹי קְדוֹשׁ. Those referred to by “people” and “kingdom” are evidently the same. “Holy” and “priests” refer then to both, and so cannot be understood except in harmony with each other. Therefore, in 1 Peter 2 the priesthood is both holy and royal. Parallelism and construct then give us “holy people” and “priestly kingdom” as referenced to the Lord, or better from the Lord. He is the center of it all. “To me” says the Lord, “you shall be a priestly kingdom, a holy people.”¹

¹One may see T. Winger, “The Priesthood of All the Baptized: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation,” unpublished S.T.M. thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1992, 21-68; G. Schrenk, “ἱερατεύω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 volumes (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 3:249-251 (hereafter abbreviated *TDNT*); J. Elliott (*The Elect and the Holy* [Leiden: Brill, 1966], 58) notes: “In light of its cultic *Sitz im Leben*, the statement eventually recorded in Ex. 19:6 signified basically the holy nation who worshiped JHWH alone and belonged

Priests are always in relationship with someone else. It is impossible to make oneself a priest, to be a priest all by oneself, or for one's own benefit. Here in 1 Peter the relationship is clearly with the Lord, and he is the one who gives and establishes the relationship: "You shall be to me a priestly kingdom and a holy people."

In talk of priests there are always two points. You cannot be a priest all by yourself. A priest is always toward some one else, toward a non-priest. In Exodus 19 it is clearly toward the Lord, for it is where he is king. Lose the king and you lose the kingdom; no priestly kingdom is possible unless directed toward the king, the Lord; his kingdom his people. What is priestly and what is holy derives only from the Lord; he is singular. Kingdom and people are collective plural. Plural not as anybody and everybody, but as those to whom he has spoken, making them his people "my own possession among all peoples." "You out of all peoples, you shall be my personal possession" (NJB), "a peculiar treasure unto me" (AV).

Other peoples outside the covenant are not priests, "not my people" (Hosea 1:9). There are only priests if there are also those who are not priests. If everybody is a priest, no one is a priest. "Universal priesthood" (*allgemeines Priestertum*), then, is self contradictory. In Exodus 19 all the children of Israel are called "a priestly kingdom." Non-Israelites are non-priests. "Israel is to have the special privilege of priests to "draw near" God, and is to do service for all of the world." Within the children of Israel there are also priests, who are distinct from the people (Exodus 19:24). The people are "a holy people" and among them are priests who are holy in a specifically distinct way (Exodus 19:22; 30:30; Leviticus 8; 10:3). That there are thus two is from the Lord, and that is inherent in his gift bestowing

exclusively to Him"; E. Kinder, *"Allgemeines Priestertum" im Neuen Testament* (Berlin: LVH, 1953), 7-11. For an account of the debate on the Baptismal character of 1 Peter one may see Elliott, 12, note 3; Winger, 108-116. For earlier usage see P. Dabin, *Le Sacerdoce Royal des Fidèles* (Paris: De Brouwer, 1950), and N. Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief* (Zurich: Neukirchen, 1979), 108-110.

ways, contrary to which would be the swallowing up of one by the other, or the one being brought into subjection to the other.²

In Exodus 19, then, there is Moses; he does what is the Lord's doing: he holies the people (19:10, 14). The people are a holy people, and a priestly kingdom, outside of which there are all the other peoples who are non-priests. The priestly people are priestly *coram Deo*. Among them there are priests distinct from them, made so, consecrated, by the Lord. There is no individual priest who has not been made a priest by the Lord. Priests are only from the Lord toward the Lord. They are ordained according to his mandate and institution, and thereby are given what they are there for, and that is what they do toward the Lord on behalf of his people. They do toward his people only what the Lord does with them, as his instruments for the Means of Grace which make, restore, and keep them as his people, holy people, priestly kingdom, which, because it is priestly, is never individual or lateral.

Yet a priest in the primary sense is always individual. What he does is the doing of a specific service that he has been ordained to do. It is always possible to answer the questions: Who is doing it? What is it that is being done? For whom, in whose place, is it being done? And as something that happens it has a specific place and time.

But now "kingdom" and "people" are plural, identified as "priestly" and "holy," and so what is here said of priests is of priests in a secondary or transferred sense. Even so the plural is not a universal, but includes only those whom the Lord calls his priestly kingdom and his holy people.

Priests both in the primary sense and in the secondary sense are that only as the Lord has said and so made them. Both are *coram Deo*, and only if they be detached from him can there be

²M. Noth, *Exodus* (London: SCM, 1962), 157. One may also compare Isaiah 61:5-6; P. Schrieber, "Priests among Priests: The Office of the Ministry in Light of the Old Testament Priesthood," *Concordia Journal* 14 (July 1988): 215-228; J. Elliott, *I-II Peter* (Minneapolis: Augsburg 1982), 84-85.

any tension or rivalry between them. Each is what it is from the Lord, and that is not interchangeable. The one does not displace or subordinate the other.

“Priestly kingdom” speaks of priests then in the secondary or transferred sense. This is utterly clear in the New Testament, and so also in its quotation of Exodus 19:6. In the New Testament there is only one priest. All other talk of priests is in the secondary sense, but is never separated from the one and only priest. It is only from him—in connection with him—that there are those who are priests in the secondary sense.

Jesus Christ is the priest before God, he offers up the sacrifice of himself for our sake, in our place. He alone does that, and only his doing it makes it sure and unfractionably complete. As priest he does it for us, and in our place, before God. It counts for us; nothing may be added as necessary to what he had done. To suggest such a something deflects from him and denies that he alone, completely and surely, is our only Savior.

“There is no more sacrifice for sin.” By his priestly sacrifice we are priested not to offer sacrifices for our sins—he has done that—but to offer ourselves, no longer forfeited to death by our sins, but alive by the forgiveness that delivers us from the dominion of sin, death, the devil, and the Law. We are living sacrifices whose lives are poured out in sacrifice to him where he has put himself to receive the sacrifice of our lives, that is our neighbor in his need.

Thus we move from Exodus 19, through Matthew 25, to Romans 12. “What I urge you to comes by way of the mercies of God. Bring as your offering the sacrifice of your bodies, living, holy and acceptable to God. This is now clearly the way he would be worshiped” (λογικὴν λατρείαν, because the death of the final sacrifice for sin has been bloodily done for the last time). Romans 11 culminates in doxology and liturgical quotation of Scripture. The Lord is the one being addressed, and this is done with words he has given: homology *coram Deo*. But the apostle does not leave them there, thus joyfully

extolling God (who is in fact in no need of any gift from us, 11:35). The old sacrifices in which the victim was killed are now done and finished in Christ's once for all sacrifice. No more such shedding of blood; now the sacrifices do not die but are offered alive to live sacrificially. This is the way sacrifices are now arranged (λογικὴν λατρείαν), sacrifices in the secondary sense, by priests in the secondary sense, for the one and only priest in the primary sense has done the all availing sacrifice in the primary sense. Lose the primary priest and the secondary are also lost. Yet, because of the primary priest there are secondary priests. The worst thing that can happen, then, is infringement of the primary priest. It is for the sake of the primary priest that Dr. Luther extols the secondary priests.

It is this sequence and connection that Dr. Luther would confess, and we are bound to misunderstand and muddle things if we do it backwards, from secondary to primary. Worse yet would be to urge unmindfulness of the primary priest on the secondary priests (as if there could be any secondary priests apart from the primary one). The primary threat is to the primary priest. Luther recognized this threat in the notion that there were still priests in the primary sense still offering sacrifices atoning for sin in emulation, cooperation, representation, completion or addition to the sacrifice of the one and only such priest in the New Testament. What Dr. Luther says against the Roman priests is not to get rid of them in order to put "the priesthood of all believers" in their place. That would be to replace one piece of popery with another. What was wrong with popery was not that it was popery, but that it infringed the one and only atoning sacrifice for sin done by Christ alone, and so done once, for all, sure, complete. To suggest something other or more is to rob Christ of his having done it all. This is confessed and defended by a *satis est*.³ Not Christ plus something more, but Christ and what he alone has done and delivers in the preaching of the Gospel and the holy

³One may compare Apology XIII:8: *satis fuisse*. Herman Sasse's Letter 13, "Conversations with Rome," will appear shortly from CPH in *Essays on Christ and His Church*.

Sacraments according to the Gospel. He gives to us, we do not give to him: *beneficium* not *sacrificium*. The *sacrificium* of Romans 12, the living sacrifice is lived out, the apostles shows, in the way the members of a body are there for each other's good and support, even to the most commonplace concerns of our interconnected lives. So, in Romans 12 Paul speaks of the *paranesis* of the living sacrifice, but never uses the word "priest." In the New Testament, then, the only priest in the primary sense is Jesus, and for priests in the secondary sense we have to look carefully.

The Book of Concord reflects this state of affairs in the fact that 1 Peter 2:9 appears only once. The Tractate cites it to undergird the fact that Christians may not be deprived of having pastors because of the pope's unwillingness to allow anyone except those ordained to offer the sacrifice of the Mass. Melancthon argued the pope may not locate the making of pastors and bishops solely in himself. The *sacerdotium* (*Priestertum*, namely, what ministers are put into) has been given to the Church, and with that the fact that the Church should elect and ordain ministers.⁴ Worst of all is the notion that papal priests infringe upon the one, primary priest, and, therefore, his one sacrifice for sin. What Christ there achieved alone, he gives out only as gift, which is what he does with his Means of Grace. Papal priests were failing to be servants – the dispensers of the Means of Grace. Pastors, of whom Christians may not be deprived, are located in the Means of Grace, which take place in the liturgy. 1 Peter is precisely that sort of text, as we have seen in the way it appears, quoting the *וְיִתְּן* passage of Exodus 19.

Let us now turn to passages from Luther and see whether he was in line with the Scriptures or not. But now, what passages in Luther? The selection may be controlled by what we want Luther to end up saying. Less risky then to let someone else

⁴Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 69-72, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, translated by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 331-332 (hereafter abbreviated as Tappert).

make the selection, and better still if that selection is made by some one not so intent on making sure that Luther comes out right. No one better, then, than an honest Roman Catholic scholar, Wolfgang Stein, who knows the language from inside.⁵ Eck and Trent respond to the same passage.⁶ Even without such credentials most would agree that the first major passage to be engaged is in the *Babylonian Captivity* of 1520 when the pent up waters burst forth. Here things are said more clearly and carefully in Latin for the clergy and the learned. Two months earlier *To the Christian Nobility* had appeared in more popular German, and had suffered misunderstanding. The sequence is the German *To the Christian Nobility*, the Latin *Babylonian Captivity*, and then Luther's defense against their misunderstandings, particularly his *Answer to the Hyperchristian, Hyperspiritual and Hyperlearned Book by Goat Emser* (1521), his *Retractions* (1521), and *Against Henry King of England* (1522). By following Luther all the way through this sequence we may let him be his own interpreter, and this may help us identify any misunderstandings we may have had.

First, the primary relevant passage in the *Babylonian Captivity* reads:

How then if they are forced to admit that we are all equally priests, as many of us as are baptized, and by this way we truly are; while to them is committed only the Ministry (*ministerium Predigtamt*) and consented to by us (*nostro consensu*)? If they recognize this they would know that they have no right to exercise power over us (*ius imperii*, in what has not been committed to them) except insofar as we may have granted it to them, for thus it says in

⁵W. Stein, *Das kirchliche Amt bei Luther* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1974), 85.

⁶W. Gussmann, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Augsburgerischen Glaubensbekenntnis* (Cassel: Pilardy, 1930), 2:134. Session 23, Cap. 4. DS1767. Luther never did say *promiscue* (one may see note 9 and 18). *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* edited by Norman P. Tanner, 2 volumes (Washington: Sheed and Ward; Georgetown University Press, 1990), 2:743.

1 Peter 2, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a priestly kingdom." In this way we are all priests, as many of us as are Christians. There are indeed priests whom we call ministers. They are chosen from among us, and who do everything in our name. That is a priesthood which is nothing else than the Ministry. Thus 1 Corinthians 4:1: "No one should regard us as anything else than ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God."⁷

1 Corinthians 4 speaks of the apostolic ministry. We know the names of those in this apostolic ministry: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Timothy, Sosthenes. They are in the "we" of 1 Corinthians 3:9, while the "you" are the Christians in the Church of God at Corinth. They are the ones to whom the gifts have so bountifully been given. For gifts to happen there is the one who gives, and the one to whom the gift is given. One cannot give oneself a gift. Gifts come from outside—*externum verbum*. These two points are there in the passage from the *Babylonian Captivity*. It appears in the section on *Ordo* (and by this Luther refers to the Roman doctrine) and also to the *ordo ecclesiasticus* of Augsburg Confession XIV and *ministerium ecclesiasticum* of Augsburg Confession V. Thus Luther speaks of papal priests, of priests as ministers (as the Apostle speaks of them), and also, distinct from these two, of priests as those baptized. In the usage of Luther and the Confessions the Latin *ministerium* is the German *Predigtamt*, and in English the Holy Ministry. Here and there you may find it as a διακονία, as in the New Testament where there are διακονίαι distinguishable from the διακονία of the apostolic ministry.

This ministry is what Luther refers to in his quotation of 1 Corinthians 4, which supplies the characterization of priests "whom we call ministers." They may not claim to be more than ministers of Christ; they may not as such go beyond what has been committed to them: the *ministerium*, the *Predigtamt*, the Office of the Holy Ministry. It is precisely the way in which

⁷*De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium*, WA 6:564.6-14; LW 36:112-113.

the pope's priests have been going beyond this, and exercising there an *imperium* that Luther identifies and denounces (for the sake of those who may not thus be tyrannized or their salvation be put in jeopardy). *Imperium* equals power and is the way of the pope and his priests who, for the sake of their *imperium*, neglect the very things committed to a minister/priest. *Imperium* displaces *beneficium*. *Imperium* goes with *sacrificium*—working God with working people. With *imperium* you have those who exercise power and those upon whom power is exercised. In the Church *imperium* produces top people and bottom people. That is not Christ's way, Luther cries out. "Let us rather listen to Paul that we may learn Jesus Christ and him crucified."⁸ As his, as baptized, we are in bondage to no man. As baptized we are all called priests, as it says in 1 Peter 2:9, which says nothing of *ministerium*, *Predigtamt*, the Office of the Holy Ministry. Luther has been denouncing those who depart this Office, who fail to do what this Office is there to do (preach, dispense, give out, the mysteries of God), and instead have been doing other things invented by men and useful for their *imperium* in tyrannizing the baptized. What lies outside their office, in the unmandated realm of human decision, they have nothing more than what the baptized may grant them, and what we thus grant them they do in our name.

Emser criticized Luther's exposition of 1 Peter 2:9, claiming that it obliterated the distinction between the clergy and the laity. Luther flatly denied this, and maintained that 1 Peter says nothing of the consecrated priesthood: "I did not say that all Christians are churchly priests."⁹ Emser found two kinds of priests in 1 Peter 2:9—inward and consecrated. Luther replied that it speaks of neither of these, but only of all Christians as priests. Later on ministers came to be called priests. "The priestly estate" had other better names and Luther runs

⁸ WA 6:562.12; LW 36:109.

⁹ *Auf das überchristlich, übergeistlich und überkünstlich Buch Bocks Emsers zu Liepzig Antwort*, WA 7:629.17; LW 39:153. Luther puts *ecclesiasticum* into German as *kirchlich*.

through them in Latin, German and some Greek. What is important is what they are put there for: "the Gospel and the Sacraments."¹⁰ God gives his gifts through ministers—it is for their being given out that the clergy are there. Gifts and Gospel involve two points: there are those who give out the gifts, and those to whom the gifts are given. If those who have been put there to give out the gifts do not give out the gifts, they have forsaken the Office which is the Lord's located instrument for his giving out his gifts. If instead of their giving out of the gifts they move to exercising *imperium*, they are guilty of sacerdotalistic tyranny, which Luther denounces and from which he proclaims the freedom of Christians.

Let us get on then, rejoicing in this freedom, the freedom of the laity from sacerdotal tyranny, the freedom of the baptized that is theirs to rejoice in as priests, as a priestly kingdom, whose king is none other than he into whose name they were baptized. You may read 1 Peter as instruction for the baptized. Luther did not invent the identification of the New Testament priests, in the secondary or transferred sense, as the baptized. It is already there in 1 Peter. That is where the Christian life goes on, baptismal level, body level, incarnational level, Means of Grace level, Calvary level. There is no higher, more spiritual, more inward level, as both the sacerdotalists and Pietists assert (Emser's inner and Spener's *Geistliches Priestertum*, which replaces Luther's "the baptized" with "the believers"). There is no "two-level" Church, with clergy above and laity below, or laity above (who hires and fires) and clergy below, or two churches, one visible and the other invisible. There are no levels—only where our Lord has put himself there for us (*dir da*) to give out his saving, enlivening gifts as he has ordained the Means of Grace to do, and put the *Predigtamt* there for the giving out of his gifts surely and locatedly in the Means of Grace (*instrumenta prima, instrumentum secundum*).

¹⁰ WA 7:630.10; 631.30; LW 39:154-155.

We may prefer to speak with 1 Peter and Luther of the priesthood of the baptized, rather than the priesthood of all believers, for Holy Baptism is what the Lord does.¹¹ Any starting point other than the Lord and where he is at giving out his gifts with the Means of Grace leads to uncertainty.¹² That is what Luther will have none of in the passage we are considering. We have a Means of Grace doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry, and a Means of Grace doctrine of the priestly kingdom, the holy people. Thus connected to and from the Lord they are clear and sure. To get them wrong we would have to disconnect them from him.

It is a *coram Deo* text using the words he has given in order to extol him “who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” He is not the direct object of the extolling (ἐξαγγείλητε) but his marvelous works. This echoes the fact that mankind is dealt with mediately, “born again by the living and abiding Word of God,” saved by water (3:21). “Dealt with mediately,” that is by the Means of Grace, by which human beings are baptized and because of which they rejoice before God, extolling his wonderful deeds and singing praises to him. Thus are they priests—the royal priesthood—who belong to and serve the king.

There is no doubt with whom, toward whom these priests are related, and what is going on there between the Lord and them. Are they related in any other direction as priests? Do they represent God to his people, or his people to God? Is their being priests toward other priests, or to non-priests? Such questions look for answers beyond what the text says. It is a *coram Deo* text, quoting from the Lord’s בְּרִית by which he makes for himself a people, all of whom are as priests before him, doing homology of his words. As *coram Deo* text it is a liturgical text from the treasury of the words of the living and abiding Lord. It is in an apostolic letter and as such is read in the liturgy, and as such is canonical.

¹¹Large Catechism, 4:10, Tappert, 437.

¹²We must note, however, that the “advantage” of that uncertainty is that we may then find some space to insert our inventions.

Luther, on the other hand, is not canonical, but he has been put into the Holy Ministry, the ministry of the Lord's living and abiding words, the ministry of the Gospel (the *Predigtamt*). There is no Baptism without a baptizer, no sermon without a preacher, and if a preacher refuses to preach he gives up being a preacher. Thus Luther exposes and castigates the papal priests who do not preach. But that is not yet the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter is that the Lord would have himself his own people in his own way. *The Babylonian Captivity* speaks of the Office of the Word and of Baptism. It is to this that the Lord ordains priests ("not papal priests but Christian priests"), according to Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:19. The office preaches and baptizes. Luther says here *sacerdotum* not *sacerdos*.¹³ The Office does it, not the man—reference to the man may prompt uncertainty. When our Lord gives out his gifts he does it in a way that is clearly his, and so quite sure. Papal priests referenced away from the Means of Grace prompt uncertainty or even denial of the gifts being given out. Baptism has prominence here because it is by Baptism that priests are made. By way of the Means of Grace his saving gifts are given. For their service the Lord instituted the *officium praedicandi*, the *Predigtamt* (Augsburg Confession V). Luther concludes that the papal priests refused the *Predigtamt* and with that rejected the gifts, faith, and Gospel. Instead they served their *imperium*, and worst of all put works in place of gifts, *sacrificium* instead of *beneficium* (as the *Babylonian Captivity* puts it). We are bound to get it wrong if we miss this point. What is at stake is that there is no other Savior than Jesus, that he has done all for our salvation, and all that he has done is given us freely as nothing but gift in the way that it is clearly nothing but gift. It is for the sake of the Means of Grace that ministers are there, not for their own

¹³ WA 6:563.17; 564.28; LW 39:111-113. WA 6:530. 27-29: "Therefore beware of making any distinction in Baptism by ascribing something external to man, and something internal to God. Ascribe both only to God, and accept the person of the one conferring it as nothing other than the vicarious instrument of God" One may compare 561.33; LW 36:62, 109; Apology 7:28: "Vice et loco Christi."

sake or in their own place, but for giving out the words, the name and water, the body and the blood. For this reason Christians may not be robbed of the *Predigtamt* (as the Tractate says in quoting 1 Peter 2:9).

We can now leave behind the papal priesthood, with Luther's criticism of it as his high watermark use of the priesthood of the baptized in the early 1520s, and may turn to what else may be said of the baptized as a priestly kingdom and a holy people. This may not be constricted by disconnecting it from what is said along with it, all the other names for the same thing, with each adding its own extolling *proprium*: a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people; living stones, holy priesthood, newborn babes, ransomed by the precious blood of Christ, sprinkled with his blood, exiles of the diaspora. Nor may it be constricted by being isolated out of its context, and pressed into service as a foundation for some doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry.

What is to be said of those to whom the gifts have been given, and are being given, those in the liturgy hearing the apostolic words? There, where the apostolic words are being heard, is the apostolic Church of which we confess ourselves to be members every Sunday in the Nicene Creed. What is to be said of all Christians as priests, or better the baptized as priests?

We are given no direct help by the New Testament or the Confessions. Revelation mentions priests and kings, but they are liturgically engaged and utterly *coram Deo*. "Cannot they be somehow related to each other as well, and further to others, to non-priests, to the not baptized? Shouldn't they go out and spread the good news?" Of course they should, but is that something said in our text? The so-called *Living Bible* simply puts that in. Instead of translating it says, "all this so that you may show others how God called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Some of this rides along when ἐξαγγείλητε is given as "proclaim," which is not really something one does toward the Lord (although possible

perhaps even for the English word as homology). Liturgical texts are best translated liturgically, in accord with that from whence they come: Isaiah 43:21 and then Psalm 102:18, 56:10.¹⁴

How the gifts given by the Means of Grace in the liturgy flow on enlivening, energizing, and shaping the lives of Christians is not so much the point here as is the way of their being priests. Scripture does not do it; the Confessions do not do it; Luther does not do it. Jesus does—not by talking about priests, but by putting himself where he would receive the living sacrifice of our lives, our neighbor in his need. What is done here is done toward the Lord, a sacrifice offered to him by every one whom he has baptized and so made one of his priests. To offer to one's neighbor such a sacrifice—the cup of water, food for the hungry, clothing for the naked, care for the sick, a visit to the lonely or in prison—is to offer it to the Lord (Matthew 25:34-45).

What is confessed in the Small Catechism's Table of Duties (better *Haustafel*), and in the whole Doctrine of Vocation, is

¹⁴What we have here is hymnic festal song—vertical—hearing his voice, and speaking his words back to him, *coram Deo*. Julius Schniewind, “ἀναγγέλλω,” *TDNT*, 1:63, note 22; L. Goppelt *Der Erste Petrusbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 1978), 151-152. J. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 100: “Again, however, as at 5, it is hard not to overhear a eucharistic note in the words. In the early 2nd cent. we know that the eucharist was understood primarily as a sacrifice of praise and reached its climax in a prayer (Justin, *I Apol.* lxv. 3; lxvii. 5; *Dial.* xli. i; Hippolytus, *Trad. apost.* iv.) giving glory and thanks to God for His goodness in creating us, in sending His Son, in redeeming us, etc.—in short proclaiming His mighty deeds. It is entirely likely that in the 1st cent. too, when Christians met together for the breaking of bread, such a recital featured prominently in the memorial they made of Christ; and the regular use of proclaim (*exaggellein*) in the LXX with the sense of cultic proclamation, or the rehearsal in adoring language of God's righteousness and praises, suggests that this is at any rate part of what is covered by the verb here.” 1 Peter 2:9 is quoted shortly before the *verba Domini* in the Liturgy of St. Basil, which we have in “the oldest complete liturgy in existence” (*Prayers of the Eucharist*, edited by R. Jasper and G. Cuming [New York: Pueblo, 1987], 118 and 114); Gerhard, 219; A. Schlatter, “*Der neue Gottesdienst*”: *Petrus und Paulus nach dem ersten Petrusbrief* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1937), 92-102.

done without mention of priests. Yet it is priestly as toward the Lord—priestly because of the sacrifice of the lives of the baptized to the Lord as they serve their neighbor in his need, there where the Lord puts himself to receive our service.

While Luther rejoiced in his primary application of “the royal priesthood, the priestly kingdom” as a defense against the papal priesthood, we need to enquire further after its positive application. We have already been pointed to their *coram Deo* liturgical vitality, and also the Romans 12 “living sacrifice,” love in the service of the neighbor, where Christ locates himself to receive this sacrifice (and so to the Doctrine of Vocation).

In *To the Christian Nobility*, Dr. Luther links Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and 1 Peter 2 and says that there are not higher and lower Christians but only differences of office and work (*des ampts odder werks halben*). He is appealing to the laity; the priests have not been doing what is really theirs to do. For this purpose he writes in German. He appeals to the *Christian Nobility* as to those baptized. As baptized they all are gifted of the Holy Spirit, as is every member of Christ's body, the Church.¹⁵ “Spiritual” may not then be said only of the clergy. Luther clarifies the usage. *Ein Geistlicher* is a clergyman, who belongs to what was called *die geystlichkeit*, or *geystlichs stand*. If “spiritual” comes from the Holy Spirit and Holy Baptism, then all the baptized are “Spiritual,” and in the same way they are priests. Luther here speaks both of the laity as priests, and of the clergy as priests. The clergy are there for the giving out of “the Word of God and the Sacraments, which is their work and office.”¹⁶ The laity are there for receiving the gifts and living them out in their callings. Whatever their calling as laity, that calling neither makes them a lower level of Christian, nor inferior in their service to God below the clergy. Their calling is their priestly service to God

¹⁵ *Tractatus de libertate Christiana*, WA 6:408.28-35; LW 44:129-130.

¹⁶ WA 6:409. 3; LW 44:130. *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen standes*, WA 7:58. 21 has 1 Corinthians 4:1 again. LW 31:356.

as they serve their neighbors in their calling. "Just as all members of the body serve one another."¹⁷

All Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of the office (*des ampts halben*) as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12 that we are all one body, yet every member has its own work by which it serves the others. This is because we all have one Baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike; for the Baptism, Gospel and faith alone make us spiritual and a Christian people.¹⁸

All this is delivered by 1 Corinthians 12; thereupon 1 Peter 2:9 and Revelation 5:9-10 are called on for support. 1 Peter 2:9 appears only once more a few paragraphs later in combination, as we observed above, with Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. What matters is how Christ has it with his body. "There is one head and he has one body."¹⁹

There are evidently three things. Two and three are always at odds with one. Two and three are never at odds with each other. First there is the papal priesthood, secondly the ministry, and thirdly "the royal priesthood, the priestly kingdom." This third item is always a powerful defense against the papal priesthood, and accords perfectly with the way the Lord deals with his people through the Means of Grace through which he bestows his gifts. This is clear from the fact that the ministers are there as his instruments, the servants of the Means of Grace, ordained to "the Office of the Word and of Baptism," according to the mandate of our Lord in Matthew 28 and Mark 16, not there for their own sake. They are ministers of Christ and of his people, who as "royal priesthood and priestly kingdom" may not be brought into bondage by displacement of their King by insertion of what men do, which brings in works, merit, power, tyranny, and thus obscures or denies that Christ is priest alone; his sacrifice

¹⁷ WA 6:409.10; LW 44:130.

¹⁸ WA 6:407.13-19; LW 44:127.

¹⁹ WA 6:408.35; LW 44:130.

alone atones for all sin. There is no more the offering of any sacrifice for sin toward God—*beneficium* not *sacrificium*. And yet, in a secondary and transferred sense, there is *sacrificium* produced by the *beneficium*. The Holy Spirit is alive and at work through his gifts in every Christian, who then “offers Spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Christians are both the temple and the royal priesthood and the sacrifice: all of them, all of their lives, bodily (Romans 12). What follows there, as in 1 Peter 2, is *Haustafel*—*paranesis*—which recognizes, indeed rejoices in, the diversity of the way the same gifts, which are given by the Spirit as confessed in the Third Article, work out in the particularity of each Christian life. Here there is no bondage of “all men are equal.” Each is unique.²⁰

“The royal priesthood, the priestly kingdom” is bulwark against the loss of Christ wrought by the papal priest. Priests in the secondary and transferred sense are born of Baptism. By what they are given by Baptism they are priests in this sense. This is how the *paranesis* goes in 1 Peter. What Luther extolls and delivers from Baptism is more than comes under “royal priesthood.” It comes first from the dominical mandate and institution and the apostolic instruction. For the Christian life he does not speak much of Christians as priests, and when he finds something priestly in a parenetic text such as Romans 12, he is prone to sling it against the pope. Nevertheless it is from this passage that he expounds the Christian life as a living sacrifice done in the living service of the neighbor. But this is not to be found in the *Babylonian Captivity*; it is not targeted in that direction.

In Luther, then, the dominant thrust of the royal priesthood comes in the early 1520s as a defense against the pope and his displacement of Christ. He also attacked the Enthusiasts’ displacement of Christ. Eck heard of Luther’s talking about all the baptized as priests and understood it as indicating that for

²⁰As always we may not stop short of the Christ point; each doctrine is worth what it confesses of him. Only if we stop short of him can we get stuck at the point of “the pope or the papal priest is not the boss here, the priesthood of all believers is.”

Luther a layman might act as if he were a priest. For this reason Article XIV was added to the Augsburg Confession. That does not happen among us; that is not what Luther was saying when he spoke of the royal priesthood as he makes quite clear in his *Retraction* of 1521.

In all my writings I never wished to say more, indeed only so much, that all Christians are priests, although not all of them are ordained (*geweiht*) by bishops, and so not all preach, celebrate Mass or exercise the priestly Office unless they were ordained to it (*vorordnet*) and called. That is all I intended to say, and so let that be that.²¹

The royal priesthood does not appear much in Melanchthon.²² After 1530 the problem was not so much the papal priests, but having enough evangelical ministers, and these we find confessed in Articles V, XIV, and XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession, as well as in the Apology and the Tractate.

In contrast, the Copenhagen Articles of 1530, which were proposed but not adopted, derived the ministry from the universal priesthood.²³ Winkler has demonstrated that it was

²¹*Ein widerspruch D. Luthers seines Irrthums, erzwungen durch den allerhochgelehrtentesten Priester Gottes, herrn hieronymo Emser, Viarion zu Meissen, WA 8:250.31-35; LW 39:233. See note 6 above and Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, 10. Aufl. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986), 69, note 1.*

²²Herrlinger, *Die Theologie Melanchthons* (Gotha: Perthes, 1879), 269-70. No distinction is made between inner and outer Word (one may compare Emser). *Against the Mass* in 1521 (then *verschwindend selten*): "Omnes enim sacerdotes sumus. Dagegen rechnet Melanchthon in den Verhandlungen des Augsburger Reichstags von 1530 zu den 'gehässigen und unnöthigen Artikeln, davon man in den Schulen zu disputiren pflegt, welche nicht in den Vergleichsversuchen brauchen verhandelt zu werden, die Frage: ob die Christen alle Priester sind'" (2:183). H. Lieberg, *Amt und Ordination bei Luther und Melanchthon* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1962), 259-267; W. Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 342.

²³N. K. Andersen, *Confessio Hafniensis* (Copenhagen: Gads, 1954), 334-363. S. Lurfeldt has noted ("Denmark" in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church* edited by Julius Bodensieck, three volumes [Minneapolis: Augsburg,

in the Reformed diaspora congregations where John a Lasco's influence was strong that the use of the universal priesthood as persuasive in matters of ministry and polity prevailed. Only with Spener, however, did what he called *geistliches Priestertum* come into tension with the Doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry as confessed in the Book of Concord. But that is a later development.²⁴ It may be instructive, however, to identify which passages were then selected out of Luther for this purpose. They are in fact the anti-papal ones of the early 1520s, which are then used to control what Luther said later. That they come from the early 1520s' anti-papal writings is not surprising in the light of what we observed above. Luther's principal use of "the royal priesthood, the priestly kingdom" was against papal displacement, not only of the ministry instituted by Christ, but more profoundly of the displacement of Christ as the one and only priest.

We shall now test this understanding of Luther against some related sermons during this period, although the pulpit usually lags behind the (that is to say, he did not rush into the pulpit with his latest insight).

In conclusion, then, let us go to St. Mary's Church for the afternoon homilies through the latter half of 1522. We have looked at some things in Dr. Luther's address *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, in the *Babylonian Captivity* to the clergy and the educated, and in his response to

1965]: 1:680) that the *Confessio Hafniensis* was "more humanist than Lutheran."

²⁴E. Winkler, *Die Gemeinde und ihr Amt* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1973), 11, 14: Spener does not speak of *allgemeines Priestertum*. The priesthood of which he speaks is not all Christians, but only those who are believers anointed with the Holy Spirit. It "is the right which our Saviour purchased for all men, and for which he anoints the believers with His Holy Spirit to serve God and their neighbor" (Philip Spener, *The Spiritual Priesthood* [Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1917], 15). Spener also claims that "all Christians have been called to spiritual offices, and are not only authorized, but, if they wish to be real Christians, they are in duty bound to fulfill them." We may wonder about Winkler's "damals" when he says, "Die Vollmacht des Amtes wurde damals auch in der Missouri-Synode vom Priestertum aller Gläubigen abgeleitet."

misunderstandings. Beginning in May *Prediger* Luther (he was not the *Pfarrer*) was preaching his way through 1 Peter.²⁵ The *Invocavit* sermons were in March. He extols 1 Peter as "the genuine and pure Gospel." What he says of the holy priesthood and the royal priesthood we have heard already, although here perhaps not with quite the same care and precision as in the Latin of the *Babylonian Captivity* and his defenses against misunderstandings. He is not writing for the Christian nobility, or for the clergy and the learned, or his opponents; he is preaching to the people.

There is a good deal against the usurpations and delinquencies of the papal priests. He begins his comment on the holy priesthood with the Augustinian distinction between outer and bodily priesthood, the external Church, contrasted with the inner, here called spiritual (little "s"), and thus spiritual priesthood (this goes with Augustinian lower leveling of the Old Testament). Then there are the clergy, who are called priests, and the other Christians, the laity. There is no other way of being a Christian than being built upon the Rock.²⁶

Luther preaches to the laity of St. Mary's as priests. The first thing about a priest is that he is that before God. "We are all priests before God as we are Christians." Priests are those who may draw near to God (*du darffst fur Gott treten*). Distinct from those priests are the ones God has put there "to preach in the congregation and give out the Sacraments." No one may do that unless he is such a priest.²⁷ Talk of priests begins best with Christ.

Now Christ is the high priest, none higher than he, anointed by God himself. What is more he sacrificed his own body for us; there is no higher priest's office than that. Along with that he on the cross prayed for us. Thirdly he

²⁵M. Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation 1521-1532*, translated by J. L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 58.

²⁶*Grund und visach aller Artikel D. Martin Luthers, so durch römische Bulle unrechlich verdammt sind*, WA 12:306.26; 307.23; LW30:52-53.

²⁷WA 12:317.4-26; LW30:63.

has proclaimed the Gospel and taught all men to know God and himself. These three offices he has also given to us all. So then since he is a priest and we are his brothers, so then all Christians have the power and command, which they must do, to preach, to draw near to God, pray for one another and offer themselves as sacrifice to God. Nevertheless, no one may undertake to preach the Word of God or speak the promise (*zusagen*) unless he is a priest.²⁸

For all his saying how good it would be to stop calling the clergy priests, he continues to do so. In this passage Christ is priest in three ways: he sacrificed his body for us, on the cross he also prayed for us, and he proclaimed the Gospel that all men might know God and himself. These three are given to all Christians since they are his brothers, who are to do likewise. Exhorting to this Luther gives the three in reverse order. Telling the Gospel, drawing near to God and praying for others, and offering themselves as sacrifices to God. Then he qualifies the foregoing to say that only priests preach the Word of God and give out the promises (which inhere in the Sacraments). So there is Christ the priest, all baptized Christians who are priests, and the priests who do what they have been put there to do.

In preaching of Christians as priests, as those set upon the Rock, as living stones, the Spirit's temple offering Spirit prompted sacrifices, holy priesthood, chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, God's own people—what is priestly is first *coram Deo*, the privilege of drawing near to God as those new born, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, praising him for all his marvelous saving works. The terms are collective. Such priests are not inward by themselves. They, born again, offer God their praises together. They pray both with and for one another. What is theirs before God, what is

²⁸ WA 12:307.27; 308.8; LW 30:53-54. *Zusagen* refers to Sacraments for which it is constitutive. WA 6:572.10-12; LW 36:124. B. Lohse, "Von Luther bis zum Konkordienbuch," *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, edited by C. Andresen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1980), 2:27. Apology 13:3.

given them there cannot be held to one's individual self without destruction. Its vitality flows on and out into each one's calling, where in serving one's neighbor one is offering God the unbloody, the living sacrifice of his life. Liturgy into living: the priesthood of the baptized. So Luther priests the people of St. Mary's Church on into their lives. Faith receives from the Lord; love gives to the neighbor.

But it all starts with priest Christ, because of whom we may draw near to God, ransomed not with gold or silver but with his precious covenanting blood sprinkled on us, with the living and abiding Word of God. Gifts thus received are extolled in the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, sacrifice prompted by the Spirit, that rings on then in our lives as those gifts are alive with the Spirit prompting there also "sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Read all about it in the Old Testament, it is just the way he has always been having himself a people, including you "exiles of the diaspora."²⁹

²⁹Psalm 137. *Lutheran Worship History and Practice* edited by F. Precht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 294. G. Besch, "Amt und allgemeines Priestertum in den Kirchen der Diaspora," in *Vom Amt des Laien in Kirche und Theologie*, edited by H. Schröer and G. Müller (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982), 306: "Auf deutschem Boden hat dann besonders der Pietismus das allgemeine Priestertum zu praktizieren versucht...In seinen *Pia desideria* von 1675 ist einer seiner (Spener's) wichtigsten Reformvorschläge die Aufrichtung (sic!) des "geistlichen Priestertums."

The Universe as the Living Image of God: Calvin's Doctrine of Creation Reconsidered

Randall C. Zachman

I remember standing in the mountains of North Carolina several years ago, in a beautiful gorge that opened out onto the low hills of South Carolina. In this gorge was a magnificent waterfall, cascading in the sunlight over the smooth granite rocks into the shadows of the pine trees below. As I stood there gazing on the glory of this scene, I overheard two gentlemen speaking next to me. The man nearest me turned to his friend and observed, "Just think of all of the kilowatts of hydro-electricity being wasted at this falls!"

How should we regard the world in which we live? Should we contemplate it as full of marvels, wonders, and miracles, which fill our minds with awe and ravish our hearts with astonishment and admiration? Or should we look upon the world as a treasure-trove of resources bequeathed to us to be used for our own advantage and profit, to be exploited for the fulfillment of our desires? We are becoming well aware of the blindness, cruelty, and folly of the latter attitude, given the alarmingly rapid degradation of the environment since the scientific and industrial revolutions, creating our current ecological crisis. Many today accuse the Christian tradition of helping to create this crisis by its teaching about the purpose of the natural world, namely, that it was created by God for the good and enjoyment of humankind. This Christian teaching has been blamed for fostering an attitude towards the world that encourages the exploitation of nature to satisfy human needs and desires. Christians are said to teach, on the basis of Genesis 1:26, that humankind has been given dominion over every living creature, and may therefore use all creatures for the fulfillment of human aims and objectives. Such teaching is said to be anthropocentric, because it places the interests of human beings at the center of the world. In his landmark article on the historical roots of the ecological crisis,

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Lynn White Jr. claimed that, "Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen," since it insists "that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends."¹ According to White, the consequence of Christian teaching is to make it "possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects."² Hence White claims that "we shall continue to have a worsening ecological crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man."³ David Kinsley has recently reiterated White's charge, and has identified John Calvin as a theologian who taught an ecologically harmful view of creation. Kinsley says of Calvin's position: "God controls and directs nature; as God's agent or special creation, human beings are to imitate this relationship in their dealings with nature."⁴ So self-evident is this claim to Kinsley that he does not cite one text from the writings of Calvin to warrant it.

Kinsley's claim, if true, would do much to substantiate the claims made by White, for John Calvin has a highly developed doctrine of the creative and providential works of God. More ominously still, Calvin is arguably the most influential theologian of the English speaking world, in which the scientific and industrial revolutions developed. Is it true that Calvin taught that it is God's will that humanity exploit nature for its own ends, with indifference for the natural world *per se*? At first sight, White and Kinsley would seem to have support for their claims in Calvin's writings. In his comments on Genesis 1:26, the key text about human dominion over all creatures, Calvin appears to confirm their worst suspicions, when he says, "we must infer [from this text] what was the end for which all things were created; namely, that none of the

¹Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," in Ian Barbour, editor, *Western Man and Environmental Ethics* (Englewood, New Jersey: Addison-Wesley, 1973), 25.

²White, "Historical Roots," 25.

³White, "Historical Roots," 29.

⁴David Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Englewood, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 111.

conveniences and necessities of life might be wanting to men."⁵ Lest we think this to be an isolated statement, Calvin repeats this thought in his exposition of Psalm 24:1: "To what purpose are there produced so many kinds of fruit, and in so great abundance, and why are there so many pleasant and delightful countries, if it is not for the use and comfort of men?"⁶ Calvin also makes this one of the major points for the reader to contemplate in the narration of the six days of creation. "God himself has shown by the order of creation that he created all things for man's sake."⁷

It is therefore undeniable that Calvin consistently and repeatedly taught that the world was created for the use and comfort of humanity, and that the abundance of good things found in the world were given to us by God for our necessities as well as for our enjoyment. However, this leaves the most important question unanswered: *Why* did God will to give us all the good things of the world, even before we were created? And how does God want us to regard the good things of the world that he has bequeathed to us? We assume that when Calvin teaches that God created all things for the use and comfort of humans, this means that we are free to treat the created world as we see fit, like spoiled children in a toy store. But what did *Calvin* mean by this teaching? How did Calvin teach Christians to regard the created order? In order to answer these questions, we will examine the meaning of the

⁵Commentary on Genesis 1:26, *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*, edited by Wilhelm Baum, Edward Cunitz, and Edward Reuss, *Corpus Reformatorum* (Brunswick: A. Schwetckhe and Son [M. Bruhn], 1863-1900), 23:27C; *The Commentaries of John Calvin on the Old Testament*, 30 volumes (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1843-48), 1:96. These works are hereafter are abbreviated CO and CTS respectively.

⁶Comm. Ps. 24:1, CO 31:244A; CTS 8:402.

⁷*Institutio Christianae religionis 1559*, I.xiv.22, *Ioannis Calvini opera selecta*, Volumes III-V, edited by Peter Barth, Wilhelm Niesel, and Donna Scheuner (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1926-52), 3:172, lines 27-28; *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill and translated by Ford Lewis Battles, 2 volumes (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1:181-182. References to the *Institutes* will cite both works in the following abbreviated fashion: *Inst.* I.xiv.22, OS III.172.27-28; (1:181-2).

three central metaphors that Calvin used to describe the created order: the theater of God's glory, the living image of God, and the beautiful garment of God.

The Theater of God's Glory

It is a commonplace that Calvin taught that the created world is the theater of God's glory; indeed, this phrase of Calvin's was used by Susan Schreiner as the title of her book on nature in the thought of Calvin.⁸ Oddly enough, however, Schreiner did not directly examine what this phrase might mean, although it would seem to deserve greater attention than it has hitherto received.⁹ If the world is a theater, then humans have been created as spectators in the audience to behold the drama enacted before them on the stage. The performance itself must be the works of God which reveal the glory of God to us. As in any good theater, the actions of God on the stage are not meant to leave us coldly indifferent, but are rather designed to move our minds and affections in a particular way. More importantly, by attentively beholding the actions of God on the stage, we are meant to arrive at a greater recognition and acknowledgment of the nature and character of the actor.

How might all of this take place? According to Calvin, the actions of God in the world set forth various powers of God; and these powers of God in turn reveal to us who God is and what he is like. As spectators of the divine performance in the world, we are to contemplate the works of God in order to discern the powers of God that shine forth in these works. "We must therefore admit that in God's individual works—but especially in them as a whole—that God's powers are actually

⁸Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin*, Studies in Historical Theology 3 (Durham, North Carolina: Labyrinth Press, 1991).

⁹Schreiner does note that for Calvin nature is "a mirror, a painting, and a theater of the divine glory" that reveals God (*Theater*, 121; one may compare 65, 107). Still, she focuses on the role of God's immutability and omnipotence in maintaining the order of nature and human society in light of the threat of chaos (*Theater*, 22, 33-35, 120).

represented as in a painting. Thereby the whole of mankind is invited and attracted to recognition of him, and from this to true and complete happiness."¹⁰ Since the powers of God that we see also invite and allure us to seek our happiness in the source of these powers, they must be good things that both individually and as a whole reveal to us the goodness of God. "It is no small honor that God for our sake so magnificently adorned the world, in order that we may not only be spectators of this bounteous theater, but also enjoy the multiplied abundance and variety of good things which are presented to us in it."¹¹ According to Calvin, the powers that especially reveal the nature of God are eternity, wisdom, power, goodness, justice, mercy, and truth.¹² When we behold these powers in the works of God, we are led to feel the force of these powers within ourselves; and since these powers are all good things, our feeling of these powers will lead to our enjoyment of them. "For the Lord manifests himself by his powers, the force of which we feel within ourselves and the benefits of which we enjoy."¹³ More importantly, by our feeling and enjoyment of the powers of God—which we behold in the theater of the world—we are invited, allured, and attracted to seek the God who is the source of all these powers, in whom alone is found human happiness and blessedness.

The creation of all good things in the world for the benefit and enjoyment of humans is not, therefore, an end in itself, but is rather the way God initially reveals to humankind that he is the author and fountain of every good thing. Our use and enjoyment of the good things of creation is not intended by

¹⁰ *Inst.* I.v.10, O.S. III.54.19-24; (1:63).

¹¹ *Comm.* Ps. 104:31, CO 32:96C; CTS 11:169.

¹² *Comm.* Rom. 1:20, *Ioannis Calvini Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*, edited by T. H. L. Parker (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 30-31; *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, edited by David W. and Thomas F. Torrance, 12 volumes (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959-72), 8:32. These works are hereafter abbreviated Romans 30-31; CNTC 8:32.

¹³ *Inst.* I.v.9, O.S. III.53.14-16; (1:62).

God to be an end in itself, but is rather the way God allures and invites us to seek him as the source of every good thing.

The Living Image of God

Calvin uses other visual metaphors besides the theater in order to develop the relationship between our awareness of the powers of God in the universe and our knowledge of the one true God. On the basis of Hebrews 11:3, Calvin develops the metaphor of the universe as the living image of the invisible God. The text itself reads, "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not been made out of things which do appear." Calvin translates the latter phrase, "So that they become the visibles of things not seen, that is the spectacles." Calvin combines this passage with Romans 1:20 in order to develop his metaphor that the universe which we behold is the living image of God. "In the whole architecture of his world God has given us clear evidence of his eternal wisdom, goodness, and power, and though he is invisible in himself he shows himself to us in some measure in his work. The world is therefore rightly called the mirror of his divinity."¹⁴

The invisible God appears to us, in a sense, in the works that he does in the world, as in a mirror or image. This means that, on the one hand, we must distinguish between the world that we see and the God whose image it is, and, on the other hand, there must be a similarity or an analogy between the image and the God representing himself therein. Inasmuch as God is the invisible, spiritual Creator of the visible and earthly image, the analogy must be one that elevates us to God by means of *anagoge*. In other words, when we see the image of God in the world, we are to lift the eyes of our minds to God, just as we turn our mind to the one portrayed when we see a portrait of that person. "By saying 'God manifested it' he means that man was formed to be a spectator of the created world, and that he was endowed with eyes for the purpose of his being led to God himself, the Author of the world, by contemplating so

¹⁴Comm. Heb. 11:3, CO 55:145-6; CNTC 12:160.

magnificent an image.”¹⁵ The image must also incite us to lift our hearts to seek the God represented in the image, which happens when we feel and enjoy within ourselves the force and benefit of the powers of God beheld in the image. By these powers, God sweetly invites us to seek him from the inmost affection of our hearts.

According to Calvin, there is an ascending order of the good things set forth in the image of God in the universe, which are to lead us gradually to God like steps on a ladder. At the bottom of the ladder are the temporal benefits of this life, such as food, housing, spouse, children, and wealth, among others. From the enjoyment of these benefits we should be led to the spiritual powers of God which these temporal benefits reveal, especially God's goodness, wisdom, and power. “For in this world God blesses us in such a way as to give us a mere foretaste of his kindness, and by that taste to entice us to desire heavenly blessings with which we may be satisfied.”¹⁶ Finally, we should be led from these spiritual benefits to the love of God for us which they reveal, so that we might cling to God alone.

Even at the present day God, though in a more sparing manner, testifies his favor by temporal benefits. . . . But by this he does not cast any hindrance or impediment in our way to keep us from elevating our minds to heaven, but ladders are by this means rather erected to enable us to mount up thither step by step.¹⁷

God descends to us in the image of the world so that we might ascend to God by means of that same image.

The Beautiful Garment of God

Calvin also describes the universe as the garment with which God clothes himself in order that the invisible God might become somewhat visible. Calvin derives this metaphor from

¹⁵Comm. Rom. 1:19, *Romans* 29; CNTC 8:31

¹⁶Comm. 1 Tim. 4:8, CO 52:300A; CNTC 10:244.

¹⁷Comm. Ps. 128:3, CO 32:328B; CTS 12:117.

Psalm 104:1-2, "For thou hast clothed thyself with praise and glory, being arrayed with light as with a garment, and spreading out the heavens as a curtain." Commenting on this verse, Calvin says, "in respect of his essence, God undoubtedly dwells in light that is inaccessible; but as he irradiates the whole world by his splendor, this is the garment in which he, who is hidden in himself, appears in a manner visible to us."¹⁸ Calvin especially uses this metaphor when he wishes to celebrate the beauty of the world. "That we may enjoy the sight of God, he must come forth to view with his clothing; that is to say, we must first cast our eyes upon the very beautiful fabric of the world in which he wishes to be seen by us."¹⁹ According to Calvin, when we rightly contemplate the beauty of the richly ornamented garment of the world, our minds and hearts should be ravished with admiration, so that our hearts are incited to praise God even as we are aware of our inability to do justice to the beauty of the world which we behold.

Accordingly, breaking off his description, he exclaims with admiration,—How greatly to be praised are thy works! even as we then only ascribe to God due honor when seized with astonishment, we acknowledge that our tongues and all our senses fail in doing justice to so great a subject.²⁰

Such amazement and admiration are clearly seen by Calvin as part of the upward ascent we are to make to God from the beauty of the Lord clothed in the garment of the universe to the Lord himself, by means of the praise of God that it inflames within us. "[W]e only praise God aright when we are filled and overwhelmed with an ecstatic admiration of the immensity of his power. This admiration will form the fountain from which our just praises of him will proceed, according to the measure of our capacity."²¹

¹⁸Comm. Ps. 104:1, CO 32:85A; CTS 11:145.

¹⁹Comm. Ps. 104:1, CO 32:85A; CTS 11:145.

²⁰Comm. Ps. 104:24; CO 32:93C; CTS 11:164.

²¹Comm. Ps. 145:1, CO 32:413B; CTS 12:273.

Speaking of the world as the garment in which God is clothed allows Calvin to speak of the care that God has directly for all living things on earth, over and above human beings. Certainly no part of the world seems more hostile to human interests and well-being than the desert wilderness, yet even here Calvin would have us contemplate the beauty and goodness of God. "Rivers run through the great and desolate wildernesses, where the wild beasts enjoy some blessings of God; and no country is so barren as not to have trees growing here and there, on which birds make the air to resound with the melody of their singing."²² Calvin draws two consequences from the tender care that God clearly has for all creatures. On the one hand, as we might expect, we are to follow the analogy and anagoge between God's care for other creatures and God's care for humankind. "It is not to be wondered at, if God so bountifully nourishes humans who are created after his image, since he does not grudge to extend his care even to trees . . . which are high and of surpassing beauty."²³ On the other hand, we also are to care for the creatures of God, in imitation of the care that God has for them. Thus, in his comment on the prohibition of killing a mother bird on her nest, Calvin says, "For if there is one drop of compassion in us, it will never enter into our minds to kill an unhappy little bird, which so burns either with the desire of offspring, or with love towards its little ones, as to be heedless of its life, and to prefer endangering itself to the desertion of its eggs, or its brood."²⁴ Nor should we denude the earth of trees during warfare, not only because their fruit manifests the blessing of God towards us, but also because such an act would deprive the earth of its beautiful ornamentation created by God. It is hard to harmonize such teaching by Calvin with Lynn White's claim that "Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects," or his claim that, "To a Christian, a tree can be no more than a physical

²²Comm. Ps. 104:10, CO 32:89B; CTS 11:154.

²³Comm. Ps. 104:16, CO 32:91-92; CTS 11:160.

²⁴Comm. Deut. 22:6, CO 24:634B; CTS 5:56.

fact.”²⁵ According to Calvin, God excludes no creature from care, and neither should we. Moreover, God is somewhat visible in the beautifully ornamented garment of the world. We should not, therefore, despoil such a garment, but should instead let its beauty ravish us with admiration, and inflame our hearts with the praise of God.

Calvin often exhorts his pious readers to contemplate God in the garment of the world in every moment of their lives, but especially on the Sabbath, which God instituted specifically for this purpose.

And certainly God took the seventh day for his own and hallowed it, when the creation of the world was finished, that he might keep his servants free from every care, for the consideration of the beauty, excellence, and fitness of his works. There is indeed no moment which should be allowed to pass in which we are not attentive to the consideration of the wisdom, power, goodness, and justice of God in his admirable creation and government of the world.²⁶

Calvin advises the reader that the best way to undertake such contemplation of the beauty of God’s works is to begin with the heavens, which were for him a clearer and more distinct image of God than the earth. “When a person, from beholding and contemplating the heavens, has been brought to acknowledge God, he will learn also to reflect upon and admire his wisdom and power displayed on the face of the earth, not only in general, but even in the minutest plants.”²⁷ Our admiration of the wisdom and power of God should increase in us the more we come to understand the universe by scientific observation, even when such observation reveals that the universe is in fact different from the way it is described to us in Scripture. “For astronomy is not only pleasant, but also very useful to be known; it cannot be denied that this art

²⁵White, “Historical Roots,” 25, 28.

²⁶Comm. Ex. 20:8, CO 24:579A; CTS 4:437.

²⁷Comm. Ps. 19:1, CO 31:194C; CTS 8:308-9.

unfolds the admirable wisdom of God."²⁸ Hence our contemplation of the powers of God in his works includes scientific observation, so long as we do not confine ourselves to secondary causes, but lift our minds from the garment of the universe to the God representing himself therein. "As soon as we acknowledge God to be the supreme architect, who has erected the beauteous fabric of the universe, our minds must necessarily be ravished with wonder at his infinite goodness, wisdom, and power."²⁹

Calvin was well aware of the temptations presented to humanity by the way God reveals himself to us in the world. The world, which is the theater of God's glory, might be abused by us as the stage on which to seek our own glory. The image of God in the universe might be mistaken for the God whom it represents, so that we seek only the good things offered to us in the world, and not the God who wishes to be sought through the image. The beautiful fabric of the world might allure us by its sweetness to enjoy it alone, and not seek our happiness in the goodness of the God who is clothed in this garment. Our scientific (Calvin would say philosophical) exploration of the works of God might stop with the mediate causes we observe, so that we obscure the powers of God shining forth in all of his works. In sum, we might be tempted to think that when God created the whole world for our benefit, the whole of our good is to be sought in the world, and not in its Creator.

According to Calvin, all of the ungodly succumb to this temptation. They seek only the good things of this world, and not the God who is inviting us to himself by means of them. They are captivated by the sweetness and beauty of the world alluring them to seek God, and seek their happiness instead in temporal blessings. As a consequence, no matter how much the ungodly enjoy worldly abundance, they always desire more, and yet their desire is never satisfied, even after they plunder the whole world. "However great the abundance of

²⁸Comm. Gen. 1:16, CO 23:22B; CTS 1:86.

²⁹Comm. Ps. 19:1, CO 31:195B; CTS 8:309.

the ungodly, yet their covetousness is so insatiable, that, like robbers, they plunder right and left, and yet are never satisfied."³⁰ The ungodly hoard the good things of the earth to themselves, and never think of using their abundance to care for those in need. The ungodly are blind to the powers of God shining forth in the universe, and are ungrateful to God for any of the blessings that they enjoy. They feed on the good things of this world like beasts with their snouts in a trough, and never once lift their eyes, minds, or hearts to seek the God who feeds them.

The godly, on the other hand, have been given the eyes of faith by the Holy Spirit, and the spectacles of the Word of God in Scripture, so that they can clearly discern the image of God represented in the universe, and lift up their minds and hearts to the God represented therein. Since the godly ascend from the benefits of God to the favor and love of God which those benefits reveal, they are content with that love alone, and do not seek their happiness or satisfaction in the good things of this life.

For this reason we ought the more carefully to mark the example which is here set before us by David, who "possessed of the greatest abundance of temporal good things, . . . not only testifies that he is mindful of God, but calling to remembrance the benefits which God had conferred upon him, makes them ladders by which he may ascend nearer to God."³¹

Thus the pious will discern the blessings of God even in extreme poverty, and will use the good things that they receive with moderation, tempered by their gratitude toward God and their care for the needs of others. "And although the faithful also desire and seek after worldly comforts, yet they do not pursue them with immoderate and irregular ardor; but they can patiently bear to be deprived of them, provided they know themselves to be the objects of the divine care."³² Most

³⁰Comm. Ps. 37:21, CO 31:376C; CTS 9:36.

³¹Comm. Ps. 23:1, CO 31:238:A; CTS 8:391.

³²Comm. Ps. 4:7, CO 31:64B; CTS 8:49.

importantly for our purposes, the godly will care for the beautiful garment of the world the way God cares for it, so that they might leave it more beautiful than they first found it.

How then did Calvin teach us to regard the world in which we live? We should be attentive spectators in the theater of God's glory, who seek to recognize the actor on the stage by means of the powers revealed in his actions. We should contemplate and meditate on the world as the living image of God, in which the invisible God renders himself somewhat visible, so that the powers we behold, feel, and enjoy in this image might lead us by *anagoge* to the God representing himself to us in this image. We should be ravished with amazement and astonishment at the beauty of the fabric of the universe, which reveals the goodness of God to us and sweetly allures us to seek God.

For God — by other means invisible — clothes himself, so to speak, with the image of the world, in which he would present himself to our contemplation. . . . Therefore, as soon as the name of God sounds in our ears, or the thought of him occurs to our minds, let us also clothe him with this most beautiful ornament; finally, let the world become our school if we desire rightly to know God.³³

Moreover, because the world is the theater of God's glory, the living image of the invisible God, and the beautiful garment that God wears, we have the responsibility to imitate God's tender care for the world.

The custody of the garden was given in charge to Adam, to show that we possess the things which God has committed to our hands, on the condition, that being content with a frugal and moderate use of them, we should take care of what shall remain. Let him who possesses a field, so partake of its yearly fruits, that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence; but let him endeavor to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or

³³Comm. Gen., Argumentum, CO 23:7-8C; CTS 1:60.

even better cultivated. Let him so feed on its fruits, that he neither dissipates it by luxury, nor permits it to be marred or ruined by neglect. Moreover, that this economy and this diligence, with respect to those good things which God has given us to enjoy, may flourish among us; let every one regard himself as the steward of God in all things which he possesses. Then he will neither conduct himself dissolutely, nor corrupt by abuse those things which God requires to be preserved.³⁴

If we had followed this teaching, would we really have been led to exploit and defile the earth with a good conscience? If we had heeded Calvin's teaching of our responsibilities toward the created world, would we really have been encouraged to gorge ourselves on the good things of the world as though we would never have to render account of our behavior to God? Is the ecological crisis of the Western world due to the fact that too many people followed Calvin's teaching about creation, or is it due to the fact that his teaching was apparently ignored?

³⁴Comm. Gen. 2:15, CO 23:44B; CTS 1:125.

Book Reviews

TESTING THE BOUNDARIES: WINDOWS TO LUTHERAN IDENTITY. By Charles P. Arand. Concordia Scholarship Today. Saint Louis: CPH, 1995. Paper.

Dr. Arand of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, has provided a significant resource for the history and theology of the Lutheran Church in the United States in this volume. Well-conceived and broadly sweeping in scope, it describes the variegated manner in which the Lutheran Confessions have—and have not—shaped the doctrine and practice of American Lutheranism. For that reason this volume should grace every Lutheran pastor and student's library, and should also find its way on to the shelves of serious students of the history of Christianity in America. Yet the volume is marred by a problematic methodology that keeps it from being a great book.

After a brief introduction, which considers the nature, characteristics, function and role of the Confessions for the Church, Arand divides the work into two parts, roughly treating the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the first are chapters devoted to the General Synod ("Confessions as Protestant Consensus"), the General Council ("Confessions as Catechesis and Teaching"), the Missouri Synod/Synodical Conference ("Confessions as Doctrinal Norms"), and the Iowa Synod ("Confessions as Historical Decisions"). In the second part he examines the confessional theology of Hamma Divinity School in Wittenberg, Ohio ("Confessions as *Dogmengeschichte*"), the United Lutheran Church in America ("Confessions as Ancient Heirlooms"), and the Missouri Synod ("Confessions as Catholic and Evangelical Witnesses"). Finally, under the broader heading "Confessions as Ecumenical Proposals," he brings the narrative very nearly up to date.

Throughout the volume Arand gives evidence of wide reading on the topic at hand, and the presentations of the material are engaging. The basic question, again, is identity formation, and the extent to which the Confessions have played a formative role in the cultivation of Lutheran confessional identity. To that end, while the chapters are mainly set apart under the various denominational/synodical labels, it is individual theologians who receive the main consideration. This is not a work of "Church History" per se. Nor is it even technically a work of "historical theology." Rather, it lies in that difficult middle realm, the nether region between systematic theology and historical theology. Arand himself argues that the book is "more systematic than historical" (page 19). The questions raised belong properly to

the realm of dogmatic/systematic thought. Methodologically, though, Arand tends simply to describe the process in and through which the ideas were generated, lived, died, and even lived again in new form. At the same time, though, there is the playing out of these questions in the day to day life of the Church—certainly a “Church History” sort of issue (for example, Missouri’s criticism of the General Council’s failure to put its theology into practice, pages 100-102). Which is all to say that Arand has taken upon himself a very difficult task at which to succeed.

Still, succeed he does—at least in part. The strongest chapter of the book is the one on nineteenth-century Missouri (pages 87-118). This careful and very satisfying treatment of Walther weaves primary and secondary sources together seamlessly, while offering an engaging vista of what unconditional confessional subscription has to offer in defining and maintaining true Lutheran identity. For Walther there was no mere abstract theology divorced from the life of the Church. Arand appropriately notes, “what mattered most is not the official position of a synod, but the practice, the sermons, and the teaching at the congregational level” (page 102). This point should be noted by all members of the LCMS, particularly its ministerium, for, I am convinced, the Synod at present occupies a place similar to that of the General Council of a century ago—solidly confessional on paper, yet wildly varying in congregational practice. It was only a matter of time before the rigorous confessional theology of the General Council was overcome by laxity in practice. Will Missouri learn a lesson from this past?

One of the reasons this chapter succeeds so well is that this is one of the few places where Arand actually makes some interpretive claims. One of the least appealing characteristics about this volume is its primarily descriptive character. Certainly it is the task of the historian to describe his subject matter and to examine and present the evidence. Yet good historical writing also assesses that evidence. Historical theology in particular offers the opportunity to make interpretive claims. So, while his subjects “tested the boundaries” of what it meant to be Lutheran, Arand consistently fails to appraise whether or not his subjects passed that test. In many ways the subtitle says it all, “Windows to Lutheran Identity.” Arand is on the outside looking in, merely describing the contours of confessional adherence. He unfortunately misses the opportunity for a more comprehensive evaluation of the lessons of history for the future of Lutheranism in America.

Arand rightly notes that "the question of Lutheran identity has always been tied to its confessional writings, perhaps more so than any theological tradition that emerged from the 16th-century Reformation" (page 264). He continues, "people need to find their roots in order to have a mooring or an internal compass to find their way through an increasingly confusing, ambiguous, and pluralistic world. The same is all the more true within the church" (page 265). Yet, when one finishes this volume, one is left hanging, wondering what it is that distinguishes true Lutheranism, on the one hand, and, on the other, at what point one ceases to be Lutheran. We are offered a pluralism of positions on confessional subscription, a panorama of options as to what it means to be a Lutheran. Does Arand have an answer? In the end he merely encourages "taking the Confessions along on our journey through Scripture" (page 266). Surely the Confessions can serve more concretely and edifyingly than that in the midst of the late twentieth-century American religious smorgasbord!

Aside from this methodological criticism, one must also note the failure of the editors to purge the several typographical (pages 212, 214, 248), grammatical (pages 128, 175), and factual problems (pages 54, 68, 198), as well as errors and inconsistencies in footnotes (page 82, note 71; page 132, notes 49 and 50). At one point Arand cites the same passage twice within a few pages, certainly an odd thing to do (pages 188, 195). Further, at times Arand's arguments seem to contradict one another. For example, at one point he states that "Eastern Lutherans had haltingly, but gradually moved away from the American Lutheranism of S. S. Schmucker toward a more rigorous confessionalism . . ." (page 151). Yet, what he gives with one hand he quickly takes back with another. In assessing the Hamma type of confessionalism he writes, "Upon closer inspection, it can be seen that, despite moving farther than Schmucker towards a greater appreciation and acknowledgment of the entire corpus of confessional writings, the confessionalism they adopted reveals much in common with that of Schmucker" (page 179). Which option shall we adopt?

In spite of these criticisms—and they are *substantive*—it remains this reviewer's opinion that Arand has provided an asset to the Church. It is the mark of good scholarship that it raises serious points of discussion—*Testing the Boundaries* does just that. Hopefully this book will find its way on to the reading lists of many

of America's Lutheran pastors, so that Arand's desire can be achieved and "the Confessions can guide theological thought in a way that does not result in the church being tossed 'to and fro' by every theological or ideological wind of the day" (page 266).

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

MELANCHTHONS BRIEFWECHSEL. Band T2. Texte 255-520 (1523-1526). Bearbeitet von Richard Wetzel unter Mitwirkung von Helga Scheible. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1995.

MELANCHTHONS BRIEFWECHSEL. Band 8. Regesten 8072-9301 (1557-1560). Bearbeitet von Heinz Scheible and Walter Thüringer. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1995.

The first section of *Melanchthons Briefwechsel* has now been finished, consisting in eight volumes of the *Regesten*, or critical introductory comments. These volumes were published before the texts of the letters themselves in order to deal with the problems of names, dates, and places in the letters. The findings in these volumes are indispensable to the serious Melanchthon scholar, but also shed much light on Luther and other reformers, as well as humanism generally in northern Europe.

Why was it important to provide a new edition of Melanchthon's letters? The reason is that the correspondence of Philip Melanchthon, as edited by Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider and published in the *Corpus Reformatorum*, volumes 1-10 (Halle: C. A. Schwetschke & Son, 1834-1842), had preceded the advent of modern historical criticism and the material was often unreliable and in need of a thorough revision. Many important letters had been overlooked or omitted altogether, many items were wrongly dated or incorrectly named, and much of the material suffered from inadequate description.

Within a few years *Corpus Reformatorum's* appearance, many letters that had been excluded appeared in books and journal articles, as well as in the volumes of the *Supplementa Melanchthoniana*. Although several volumes of letters were planned for *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl* (edited by Robert Stupperich, 1952 and following), only volume seven appeared (in two parts), and the edition was not completed.

This is not to say, however, that the material in *MBW* is exhaustive. For example, if one compares the very first letter offered, *MBWT2:27*

with the edition of the same letter in *Melanchthons Werke, Studienausgabe* (edited by Hans Volz [Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1971], 183-185), one finds that Volz provides thirty-six lines of very important commentary, compared to a meager ten lines in *MBW*. A similar comparison with the same letter in *Corpus Reformatorum* 1:597 shows that Bretschneider only provided two lines with a total of nine words.

Volume T2 presents the correspondence of Melanchthon in the crucial Reformational years of 1523-1526. Letters from others to Melanchthon include the names Camerarium, Erasmus, Öcolampadius, Paracelsus, Pirckheimer, Schenkfeld, and Spalatin, just to provide a sampling. Letters by Melanchthon are addressed to such notables as Johannes Agricola, Billicanus, Thomas Blarer, Simon Grynaeus, Lang, Link, Moibanus, Schleupner, and Speratus, among many more.

In volume eight, Heinz Scheible and his associates have brought a wealth of knowledge to their projects. Scheible himself is a better historian than theologian. Confessional Lutherans should be aware that he is a member of the Union Church and that he shows little interest in Confessional Lutheran issues. His allegiance is to the liberal theology of Karl Holl, with its interpretation of Luther's doctrine of justification as inner renewal rather than forensic declaration. His theological reviews are, of course, reflected in his comments. Regarding the Lord's Supper, he represents the position of the Leuenberg Concord, which established pulpit and altar fellowship among the Luther, Reformed, and United Churches of Germany. This becomes noticeable in the treatment of the controversial correspondence of Melanchthon with Elector Friedrich III of the Palatinate on November 1, 1559, consisting of a letter to Friedrich and an "Opinion" on how to deal with the sacramental controversy between the Gnesio Lutheran, Heshusen, and his Reformed opponent, Kebitz. The treatment of this episode (*MBW* 8:408) is sketchy and disappointing. The matter is crucial for the history of the Confessions, however, because Melanchthon in his "Opinion" did not support Heshusen, who represented the strict Lutheran position, but suggested expelling both Heshusen and Klebitz from Heidelberg. Elector Frederick III followed Melanchthon's advice. Later he officially converted to Calvinism and banned the Lutheran Church in his territory.

The editors provide some very fine indices: a listing of the writers of the letters, of the recipients, and also of correspondence exchanged between others than Melanchthon, an index of biblical references, a register of names, authors, and works prior to 1500, and a similar listing after 1500. These indices are exceedingly useful and very much enhance the value of the edition.

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Buffalo, New York

AUGUSTINE CONFESSIONS: BOOKS I-IV. Edited by Gillian Clark. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1995. x and 198 pages.

I have a *confession* to make: I had read only small amounts of ecclesiastical Latin before this review, and virtually nothing by St. Augustine himself. This is reprehensible, though not surprising: many classicists remain unfamiliar with "late" Latin. Clark prepared this edition to help just such people (vii). Augustine's Latin fluctuates considerably, resembling now the Psalms of Jerome's Vulgate, now the highly-wrought prose of Cicero, now Virgil's *Aeneid*, now a snatch of Plotinus' philosophy. What binds everything together is a narrative in which Augustine looks back upon his earlier life of forty-three years and begs God's forgiveness. This personal, self-reflective tone (which Clark calls a "one-sided conversation with God," page 8) marks a departure from earlier, more detached styles of classical discourse.

Any Christian can identify with Augustine's life experiences, which he pours forth freely before God and the rest of humankind. He seems to have experienced a completely wretched childhood, crying too fiercely at the pap (*uberibus inhiabam plorans*, 1.7.11), and uttered his first prayers to God in hopes of avoiding beatings from violent teachers at school (*ne in schola vapularem*, I.9.14). The path to worldly success lay through acquiring a classical education and an ability to sway audiences through public oratory. Augustine excelled at these endeavors, and even enjoyed them, yet complained that he learned vice through the classics (1.16.26). He wept at Dido and Aeneas' love affair (1.13.21), yet came to despise the Holy Scriptures as inferior to Cicero (3.5.9). During a boisterous boyhood Augustine once joined young friends in pillaging a pear tree-only to throw its fruit to pigs, rather than eat and enjoy the fruits of their sin

(2.4.9). By age sixteen Augustine was "in exile from the delights of Thy [God's] house" (*exulabam a deliciis domus tuae*, 2.2.4). Instead, he was "on fire to be satiated with hell" (*exarsi . . . satiari inferis*, 2.1.1)—that is, he had come of age sexually. Now he competed with his fellows not only in actual sexual conquests but in boasting about them (2.3.7). Theatrical performances (3.2.2) so greatly inflamed Augustine's lusts that he once tried to consummate a love affair within the very walls of a church (3.3.5). An encounter with Cicero's *Hortensius* when he was eighteen pushed Augustine off in a different direction: toward the pursuit of wisdom (3.4.7). This infatuation, however, appears to have made Augustine ripe for Manichaeism, which entrapped him for nine years (4.1.1). The full story of Augustine's loss of enthusiasm for that sect, the impact of Ambrose's preaching at Milan, and the eventual return of Augustine to Christianity does not occur until the fifth book; book four concludes with Augustine's grief at the death of an unnamed friend (4.4.7-9). Manichaean beliefs brought Augustine no consolation at the time, yet he learned from this death to fix his soul on God (4.11.16), not on beauty, friendship, or any created thing.

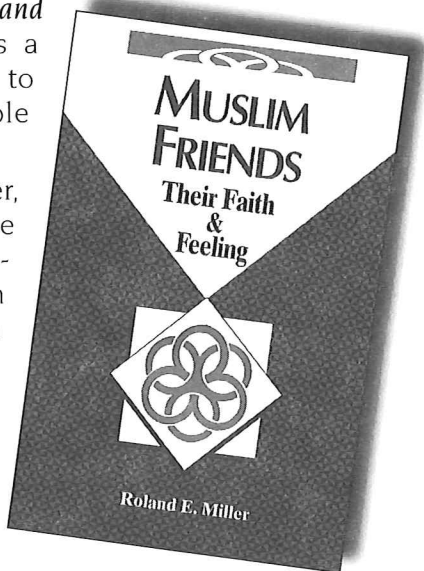
Thus, Clark's edition covers Augustine's childhood, student days, and the beginning of his teaching career. The editors hope that readers will "find it impossible to stop [here]," but go on and read all thirteen books of the *Confessions* (vii). Clark has prepared a twenty-five page introduction which explains Augustine's life history, the genre and style of the *Confessions*, the philosophical and theological concerns of late antiquity (Manichaeism, Platonism, Christianity), and the manuscript tradition. The Latin text appears (pages 29 and following), along with a commentary (pages 84-189), which follows text divisions into book, chapter, and paragraph. Clark proceeds by paragraph, providing first an overview of the whole, then explicates those Latin phrases that are most deserving of comment. In this way he brings together the parallel texts (biblical and otherwise) with which Augustine was engaged, and includes the insights of modern scholars whose literature he compiles in the bibliography (pages 190-193). Two brief indices (Latin words and general) conclude the volume.

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