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Joint Lutheran/Roman Catholic Declaration on Justification: A Response

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Historical Introduction

The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* was prepared between 1995 and 1997 by Roman Catholic and Lutheran theologians under the auspices of the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). In 1995 the first version was sent to the participating churches. The Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France prepared a Lutheran response, while the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity under Cardinal Cassidy acted for the Vatican. A revised text was ready by the summer of 1996 and further changes were suggested by the LWF Council in September. A final version was authorized for distribution by the LWF Executive Committee in February 1997.¹ This text was adopted with near unanimity (958-25) by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) at its August 1997 assembly in Philadelphia.²

The *Joint Declaration* is not a new, independent effort, but concludes and summarizes various national and international Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogues. The 1980 papal visit to

¹Following the directive of the LWF Executive Committee, General Secretary Ishmael Noko asked the 124 member churches to answer the following question regarding the approval of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JD) by May 1, 1998: "Does your church accept the conclusions reached in 40 and 41 of the JD and thus join affirming that, because of the agreement of the fundamental meaning and truth of our justification in Christ to which the JD testifies, the condemnations regarding justification in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching on justification of the Roman Catholic Church presented in the JD?" *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: A Commentary by the Institute of Ecumenical Research* (Hong Kong: Clear-Cut, 1997) was distributed in May 1997. This document is hereafter referred to as *A Commentary*.

²The General Synod of the Church of Norway accepted the *Declaration* on November 14 and urged its pastors to acquaint their people with the decision. In Finland the church delayed final approval until May 1998.

Germany on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession provided the original stimulus. This led to the formation of the Ecumenical Working Group of Evangelical and Catholic Theologians in Germany, who by 1986 produced *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?*³ This evoked a negative response by the Evangelical [Protestant] theological faculty of Georgia Augusta University, Göttingen, Germany: *Outmoded Condemnations? Antitheses between the Council of Trent and the Reformation on Justification, the Sacrament, and the Ministry—Then and Now.*⁴ A formal lifting of mutual condemnations on justification was planned for 1997 to coincide with the 450th anniversary of the Council of Trent's Decree on Justification and the fiftieth anniversary of the Lutheran World Federation in 1997. The issue proved too intractable for this time-table.⁵

Unlike the ELCA-Reformed *Formula of Agreement*, the *Joint Declaration* does not call for full communion, although the doctrine of justification is no longer considered an obstacle to bringing it about: "the mutual 'anathemas' (condemnations) drawn up in the sixteenth century on the teaching of justification no longer apply to these churches." The *Declaration* has a core resemblance to Lutheran accords with the Reformed. As in the *Agreement* and *Marburg Revisited*, past differences are seen as "complementary." Like *A Common Calling*, which speaks of the "diverse witnesses to the one Gospel that we confess in common," the *Joint Declaration* holds that with this current agreement on the "basic truths of the doctrine of justification,"

³Edited by Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, translated by Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

⁴Translated and first published by Oliver K. Olson with Franz Posset in *Lutheran Quarterly* 5 (Spring, Autumn, and Winter 1991), and later in book form (Ft. Wayne, Indiana: Luther Academy, 1992).

⁵Wilbert Rusch remarks that the attempt to articulate sufficient agreement on justification to warrant declaring "inapplicable" the sixteenth century condemnations was undertaken "at an original suggestion from the ELCA" ("The Ecumenical Task of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: Some Personal Observations," *Lutheran Forum* 30 [September 1996]: 22). Rusch does not provide details.

the characteristic "concerns" of each communion with their "remaining differences" are now mutually acceptable. Without disowning its past, each church holds that "the understanding of justification set forth in this Declaration shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics." Positions of each are tolerable within the doctrinal dimensions of the other. "Therefore the Lutheran and the Catholic explications of justification are in their differences open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding basic truths."⁶ Many prominent Lutheran theologians of course approve of the *Joint Declaration*. Harding Meyer invokes the LWF's ecumenical slogan of "Reconciled Diversity," and Carl Braaten calls it "a step in the right direction."⁷ Others are more reserved, as will be shown.

The Structure of the *Joint Declaration*

The *Declaration* consists of forty-four paragraphs which are subdivided into five sections. Under "A Preamble" are found paragraphs 1-7. The first major section, "1. Biblical Message of Justification," is subdivided into paragraphs 8-12. The entire second major section, "2. The Doctrine of Justification as Ecumenical Problem," is contained in paragraph 13. There follows section "3. The Common Understanding of Justification" in paragraphs 14-18. This "common understanding" is then unfolded in the longest section, "4. Explicating the Common Understanding of Justification" in paragraphs 19-39. Section 4, paragraphs 19-39, is further divided into seven aspects of the doctrine over which the churches were divided. In each of the seven parts, the Lutherans and Roman Catholics first set forth their common agreement before separately presenting particular emphases. The final section, "5. The Significance and Scope of the Consensus Reached," encompasses paragraphs 40-44 and resolves the quandry of section, "2. The Doctrine of Justification

⁶*Declaration* 5.40.

⁷Harding Meyer, "Nicht mehr unueberwindlich," *Lutherische Monatshefte* 36 (September 1997): 27; Carl Braaten, "Confessional Integrity in Ecumenical Dialogue," *Lutheran Forum* 30 (September 1996): 25.

as Ecumenical Problem." On the basis of this consensus, the mutual condemnations are lifted (paragraph 41). Paragraph 44 concludes with gratitude for "this decisive step forward" and a prayer to be led "further toward that visible unity which is Christ's will." References to supporting documents are included in an "Appendix."

Some Illuminating Textual History

From a Lutheran perspective, the *Declaration* is not entirely without merit. Paragraph 31 expresses Lutheran-Roman Catholic consensus on the Law and the Gospel: "We confess together that persons are justified by faith in the Gospel 'apart from works prescribed by the Law'" (Romans 3:28). Christ has fulfilled the Law and by his death and resurrection has overcome it as a way to salvation . . ." This comes closest to an explicit profession of *sola fide*, which is found in the *Declaration* only in paragraph 26 prepared by the Lutherans.⁸ Paragraph 32

⁸Note must be taken also of two documents: "Evangelicals & Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (*First Things* 43 [May 1994]: 15-22), and "The Gift of Salvation" (*First Things* 78 [January 1998]: 20-23), in which Lutherans had no hand. "The Gift of Salvation" is a document agreed to on October 6-7, 1997 by a group of Evangelicals and Roman Catholics, including Harold O. J. Brown, James Packer, Avery Dulles, and Richard Neuhaus. It expressly affirms "agreement with what the Reformation traditions have meant by justification by faith alone [*sola fide*]." This document is not the object of our critique, but it has fine points. For example, "In justification God, on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone, declares us to be no longer rebellious enemies, but forgiven friends, and by virtue of his declaration it is so." It also speaks of "justification [as] central to the scriptural account of salvation." Both documents laid down a common agreement on certain issues, but were also forthright in setting down disagreements. Among these are "the meaning of baptismal regeneration, the Eucharist, and sacramental grace; the historic uses of the language of justification as it relates to imputed and transformative righteousness; the normative status of justification in relation to all Christian doctrine; the assertion that while justification is by faith alone, the faith that receives salvation is never alone; diverse understandings of merit, reward, purgatory, and indulgences; Marian devotion and the assistance of the saints in the life of salvation; and the possibility of salvation for those who have not been evangelized." This could also be taken into our critique of a *Declaration*. The earlier document, "Evangelicals & Catholics Together" also affirmed a basic

is also unmistakably Lutheran. This is contradicted by the next paragraph (33) which is unmistakably Roman Catholic: the statement that "Christ is not a lawgiver in the manner of Moses" allows the traditional Roman evasion that the ceremonial but not the moral law is excluded from justification. The scholastic view that the Gospel is the "New Law" is left in place. To this the Lutheran response has always been Romans 7:7: "I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'" St. Paul meant to exclude precisely the *moral* law from justification. In the view of six ELCA theologians (from Luther Seminary, Saint Paul), the good Lutheran statements above were likely "a last minute insertion by some of the German Lutheran representatives who were worried about the tilt of the whole document toward individual internal transformation through grace rather than newly righted relationships through God's Word of Law and Gospel."⁹ They point out that since the necessary theological presuppositions are nowhere developed in the document, the good paragraphs 31-32 "connect with nothing."¹⁰

Justification as Criterion?

Even more telling is the history behind the amendment of paragraph 18, regarding justification as "criterion." We rely here on Eberhard Jüngel's critique, "Um Gottes willen—Klarheit!" [For God's sake—clarity!].¹¹ After intense discussions, the

agreement in faith. Such concerns are also applicable to the *Declaration*.

⁹"A Call for Discussion" was the product of six professors and not the entire faculty of Luther Seminary, Saint Paul. The faculty, however, passed a resolution May 22, 1997, which said the *Declaration* touched on the central Lutheran doctrine and questioned the legality of the proposed action. A vote on the *Declaration* "would run the risk of signaling that the ELCA is not serious about its own confessional heritage or its relationship to the Roman Catholic Church."

¹⁰The Strasbourg Institute's *A Commentary* notes that, "No Catholic condemnations relate to the law-gospel distinction as such" (41).

¹¹Eberhard Jüngel, "Um Gottes willen—Klarheit! Kritische Bemerkungen zur Verharmlosung der kriteriologischen Funktion des Rechtfertigungsartikels—aus Anlass einer ökumenischen 'Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre,'" *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

German LWF contingent proposed that the article of justification be recognized "as criterion" which "constantly serves to orientate all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ." This change was officially accepted into the June 1996 version of the *Joint Declaration*, but then vetoed by the Roman Sacred Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith. As Jüngel puts it: "Cardinal Ratzinger corrected Cardinal Cassidy to the effect that the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity* may concede only that ' . . . the doctrine of justification is an indispensable criterion.'" By the addition of the indefinite article "an," justification was demoted from its position of unique, overarching criterion to one among others. Roman Catholics added that they "see themselves as bound by several criteria." This intervention by Ratzinger's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith may signal that the Vatican is actually planning to grant its long-delayed official approval to the final text, though some Lutherans remain unconvinced.

Finnish Additions

Finnish theologians may have been even more influential than the Germans. This is evident from a comparison of the 1995 version of the *Joint Declaration*, the January 30, 1996 submission by the Council for International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, and the final version of the *Declaration*. Despite some muddles, which will be discussed below, the theologically forceful language of the Finnish response found its way into the final text, including the addition of a whole new paragraph (8) on the rich Old Testament background of section "2. Biblical Message of Justification." Another improvement was the inclusion of explicit Trinitarian-Christological language at various points, especially in a completely reworked paragraph 15, which previously was lacking in substance.

**Failures of the *Declaration*:
A Confessional Lutheran Perspective**

1. Justification: Forensic or Transformational?

The foremost defect of the document is that it does not come clean on the most glaring conflict between Augsburg and Trent. For Lutherans justification is essentially forensic, that is, God declares the sinner righteous on account of and in Christ. Roman Catholics define justification as an internal transformation of the believer, a "process," which Lutherans place in the area of sanctification, about which too there are different understandings. Roman Catholics have understood grace as if it were almost a substance, *gratia infusa*, which is poured into the soul initially by Baptism.¹² Lutherans with Paul see justifying grace as the *favor Dei*, God's gracious attitude whereby He accepts sinners. The title of paragraph 4.2, "Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous," could be understood in a Lutheran way. The famous paragraph 72 of Apology IV makes it clear that faith "being made righteous" in justification means only receiving "the forgiveness of sins."¹³ Clearly this is not what is meant in the *Joint Declaration*. However, the Formula of Concord expressly rejects the view that justifying righteousness "consists of two pieces or parts, namely, the gracious forgiveness of sins and, as a second element, renewal or sanctification" (SD, III, 48). We are not alone in our concerns. So also the six ELCA theologians:

The fundamental problem with JDDJ is that it seems to subsume the Lutheran understanding of justification under a Roman Catholic understanding of justification as a process whereby the soul is progressively transformed through "grace". . . . *The document presents an understanding of justification in terms of the soul's progressive internal transformation by infused grace, and never refers in a vital or critical way to the Lutheran insistence on justification by faith alone (sola fide) in God's Word of promise, no doubt*

¹²See footnote 16.

¹³See also the explanation in FC, SD, III, 19 and 20.

because such insistence would undermine the entire structure of the doctrine of justification proposed by JDDJ (emphases in original).

This objection does come a bit late! For years the ELCA compromised itself in various ecumenical dialogues. Lutheran acceptance of the Roman Catholic position on justification should come as no surprise. H. George Anderson, now Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, co-chaired the U.S. Lutheran–Roman Catholic dialogue on Justification by Faith, which concluded: “156 (5) . . . By justification we are both declared and made righteous. . . 158. . . [God’s saving work] can be expressed in the imagery of God as judge who pronounces sinners innocent and righteous, . . . and also in a transformist view which emphasizes the change wrought in sinners by infused grace.”¹⁴ On this point the Lutherans completely surrendered, but Rome was not required to reform her traditional definition, which was officially restated in the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “Justification includes the remission of sins, sanctification, and the renewal of the inner man” (498). The characteristic Roman Catholic fusion of “forensic” and “transformist” views of justification has been wrongly attributed to Luther by such prominent scholars as Alister McGrath and Tuomo Mannermaa, as will be shown below.¹⁵

2. *Sola Gratia*: No Real Advance

The present *Declaration* is willing to grant *sola gratia* simply because the Lutheran and Roman parties had different understandings of “grace.” If saving grace is God’s undeserved favor, as in Romans 4:4 and 11:6, then, in the article of justification, grace and works (Law) are clearly mutually exclusive. Justification is either by grace or by works, but not

¹⁴“U.S. Lutheran–Roman Catholic Dialogue, Justification By Faith,” *Origins: NC Documentary Service*, 13 (October 6, 1983): 298.

¹⁵Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification, from 1500 to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 1993), 10-32, 44-53, 125-130.

both. But if grace now means infused grace, a spiritual power poured into the soul by which we love God and merit salvation, then such infused grace and works in justification are related as "both/and." Neither the *Joint Declaration* nor the background dialogues have come to terms with these contradictory meanings of "grace."¹⁶ This would have unraveled the illusory "consensus" on justification. Another ELCA critic of the *Declaration*, Louis A. Smith, writes:

Second, and in witness to the confusion produced by the niceness, the document keeps pointing us to a doctrine of justification *by grace*, as if the mere agreement on that terminology was some kind of breakthrough. It isn't! The 16th century had any number of colloquies between Roman Catholics and Lutherans who knew perfectly well that the disagreeing parties used the same language. What they disagreed about was the meaning of the terms. *Grace* was for Lutherans *favor Dei*, the personal good will of God. For Roman Catholics, *grace* referred to a quasi-substantial something, *habitus* or *qualitas* that was infused (poured) into the human soul. Indeed, in the 16th century, even the language of *justification by faith* could have been agreed on, if Lutherans would only have accepted that faith referred to

¹⁶"A Call for Discussion" notes that Trent sees "justification as a process of growth in holiness empowered through the gift of grace given in the sacraments. Grace is understood as an infused causal power that transforms the soul." Aristotle's four causes are taken into the Tridentine definition. Predisposing or helping grace [first cause] turns the sinner from sin to "the church's 'instrumental cause' of justification which is baptism [second cause]. In baptism, the cleansing of original sin and the remission of actual sin (up to the time of baptism) are received, together with the infusion of grace which renews the soul and enables the observance of the commandments. This is supplemented by the rite of penance for post-baptismal sin [third cause] and by the necessary but always uncertain grace of perseverance in holiness of life until the end [fourth or final cause], when, for those who persevere, God grants eternal life both as a further gift and as reward promised for good works."

the beginning of and a necessary element within a process, which then gave its name to the process as a whole.¹⁷

Perhaps the only genuine departure from the Tridentine scheme is section 4.6, *Assurance of Salvation* ("36. Catholics can share the concern of the Reformers to ground faith in the objective reality of Christ's promise. . . . No one may doubt God's mercy and Christ's merit. . . . Recognizing his own failures, however, the believer may yet be certain that God intends his salvation"). The six ELCA theologians see here "a possible ecumenical breakthrough," although in their opinion it is "undeveloped." Unfortunately, they say, this section "appears to have no connection to the rest of the document." The Finnish document commended the stronger language of an earlier version: "Thus it is true to say: faith as assurance of salvation [is] a profound consensus on this question." This formulation required Roman approval and so it is not surprising that the final version toned down the language. Smith is genuinely pessimistic about the overall value of this section and the other "good" one, "Law and Gospel." He notes: ". . . unless it should turn out that sections 4.5 and 4.6 are to be taken as the hermeneutical keys to the entire document, . . . [then] the rest of the document is much fluff, an appropriate target for a white-out sale."¹⁸

3. Justification: The Article by Which the Church Stands or Falls, or One Truth Among Others?

Much more is at stake in this discussion for Lutherans than for Roman Catholics, who see justification as one topic among others and give it another definition.¹⁹ For Lutherans

¹⁷Louis A. Smith, "Some Second Thoughts on the *Joint Declaration*," *Lutheran Forum* 31 (Fall 1997): 8.

¹⁸Smith, "Second Thoughts," 8.

¹⁹See "Grace and Justification" in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* ([Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1994], 481-490), which weaves together justification, grace, merit, and Christian holiness in a way consistent with the Council of Trent.

justification is the integrative center of all faith and theology.²⁰ Without justification, Lutherans lose the distinctive characteristic of their theology and the reason for their existence. It is the core of all Christian truth and gives form and shape to all other biblical articles. All articles are at stake in justification and justification is at stake in all articles. It is the very engine which drives not only the Augustana (XX,8) but the entire Concordia (Apology IV, 2; XII, 3, 10; Smalcald Articles II/I; Large Catechism, Creed, 33, 54, 55; Formula of Concord, SD, III, 6; V, 1). The six ELCA theologians are quite right in saying: "Lutherans have always insisted that justification by faith alone is the chief article and *the* criterion, the 'plumb line' by which all doctrine and practice is to be judged."²¹

Paragraph 18 of the *Joint Declaration* tries to accommodate the Lutheran position by saying that the article of justification "is more than just one part of Christian doctrine" and that it "stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith." However, as we have seen, the attempt to have the article of justification defined as overall "criterion" was blocked by the Vatican and the "criterion" reduced to one among others.

Some who may find the protracted discussion on justification too abstract, easily recognize differences in beliefs and practices that the *Declaration* leaves untouched. These "neuralgic points" are concealed under broad dogmatic terminology in paragraph 43 of the *Declaration*. The United States dialogue, however, was more forthright: "some of the consequences of the differing outlooks seem irreconcilable, especially in reference to particular applications of justification by faith as a criterion of all church proclamation and practice" (paragraph 121). To wit: "Catholics and Lutherans, for example, traditionally differ on purgatory, the papacy and the cult of saints" (153). The solution

²⁰"In this controversy the chief article [*locus*] of Christian doctrine is at stake, which, when it is properly understood, illumines and magnifies the honor of Christ and brings to pious consciences the abundant consolation which they need" (Apology IV,2).

²¹"A Call for Discussion," citing a Memo of March 5, 1997 to the ELCA Synod Bishops of Regions 1 and 3.

of "this impasse" (121) is of course for the Lutherans to surrender the Reformation position: "Lutherans, however, do not exclude the possibility that such teachings can be understood and used in ways consistent with justification by faith; if such teachings are preached and practiced in accord with this doctrine, they need not, from this Lutheran perspective, divide the churches even though Lutherans do not accept them" (153)!²² The Augsburg Confession (XXII-XXVIII) and the Smalcald Articles (Part II) applied the criterion of justification to practice in the same way they applied it to doctrine. Lutherans of Reformation times held that practices which contravened justification did in fact divide the church. Practice mattered as applied doctrine. The Evangelical-Roman Catholic *Gift of Salvation* paper spells out "diverse understandings of merit, reward, purgatory, and indulgences, Marian devotion and the assistance of the saints in the life of salvation, and the possibility of salvation for those who have not been evangelized." For Lutherans it is nonsense to speak of consensus on justification if these issues remain unsettled. Differences in practices point to fundamental doctrinal discrepancies.

4. Original Sin?

Behind the Lutheran-Roman Catholic differences on justification are equally fundamental differences on how original sin is understood. Differences on one doctrine mirror differences in others. Lutherans hold that original sin is really sin and that it remains after Baptism. Roman Catholic doctrine holds that original sin is eradicated by Baptism and that concupiscence is not really sin. Avery Dulles raises the issue in his cautionary piece: "Can unjustified sinners, with the help of grace, freely dispose themselves to receive the grace of justification, as affirmed in Trent's canon 4 on justification? Or are sinners so radically corrupted that they cannot, even with

²²The Jesuit theologian Avery Dulles is quite precise in recognizing these differences. See "On Lifting the Condemnations," *Dialog* 35 (Summer 1996): 220.

the help of actual grace, prepare themselves for justification?"²³ The issue came to a head in Trent's Decree Concerning Original Sin (Fifth Session), which calmly anathematized St. Paul: "This concupiscence, which at times the Apostle calls *sin* [Rom. 6-8; Col. 3] the holy Synod declares that the Catholic Church has never understood to be called sin, as truly and properly sin in those born again, but because it is from sin and inclines to sin. But if anyone is of the contrary opinion, let him be anathema."²⁴ Hubert Jedin, the great modern Roman Catholic authority on Trent, acknowledges that problem: "The Council was now brought up against the very basis of the Lutheran teaching on justification, and one of the most difficult points of controversy, because Luther's view seemingly found support in St. Paul and St. Augustine. . . . The teaching of canon 5 on concupiscence laid the foundation of the subsequent decree on justification."²⁵

An earlier version of the *Joint Declaration* contained this bald statement: "Properly speaking, [concupiscence] therefore is not sin." This was criticized in some detail, particularly by the Finnish response, which suggested "that the last sentence ('Properly speaking, it therefore is not sin') be eliminated." The final version complies technically, but safeguards the Tridentine substance by having paragraph 30 say that baptismal grace

takes away all that is sin "in the proper sense" and that is "worthy of damnation" (Romans 8:1). There does, however, remain in the person an inclination (concupiscence) which comes from sin and presses toward sin. Since, according to Catholic conviction, human sin always involves a personal element and since this element is lacking in this inclination, Catholics do not see this inclination as sin in an authentic sense.

²³Dulles, "On Lifting," 220.

²⁴*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, translated by H. J. Schroeder (St Louis and London: B. Herder, 1941), 23.

²⁵Herbert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1961), 2: 145, 162.

Although this inclination is “objectively in contradiction to God,” it “does not merit the punishment of eternal death and does not separate the justified person from God.” Here excuses for sin are substituted for forgiveness and justification!²⁶

5. Justification: Christological Core and Center

Defining justification is a delicate task. Even some Reformation-era Lutherans slipped into a Roman-like (scholastic) understanding of it.²⁷ Justification is also the most central of all articles of faith, *because it gives form and shape to all the other articles as they apply to the believer*. Without relating a particular article to justification, that doctrine is not properly understood. So when justification is misunderstood, the entire body of doctrine is off balance. Justification describes the believer’s relationship to God as he is accepted for Christ’s sake. So it is not only a matter of how a particular article is biblically demonstrable (*sola scriptura* [AC XX, 11 {Eph 2:8-9}]), but also how it relates to justification as the core article by which the church stands or falls. Justification is a distinct article but belongs to and is never separate from Christology (*solus Christus*). Christology and justification are two sides of one doctrine—what God accomplishes in Christ (atonement), He applies to believers (justification).²⁸ Rome sees justification as what God accomplishes in the believer (transformist view). The Lutheran *christological* view stands diametrically opposed to the Roman *anthropological* one. Lutherans quarrelled not with Rome’s Christology *qua* Christology (that is, the Second Article of the Nicene Creed), but with Rome’s doctrine of justification which rendered this Christology ineffective for the believer. So

²⁶*A Commentary* (38-41) forthrightly acknowledges that both sides define sin differently. What is more telling is their claim that modern exegetes do not agree with Luther’s interpretation that the sinful “I” of Romans 7:14-24 is St. Paul as believer rather than St. Paul before his conversion. This of course supports the Roman view.

²⁷FC, III and IV, “Justification” and “Good Works.” One may also see Franz Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 3 volumes (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1917-1924), 2:633-635. FC, Ep III/8 explicitly condemns “that renewal [*renovationem*] and love belong to our righteousness before God.”

²⁸One may see the Smalcald Articles.

it was not simply that such things as Masses for the dead or purgatory lacked biblical support, which of course they did, but more importantly, these were rejected because they detracted from Christ's work and deprived Him of His glory.²⁹

Rome's view of grace as an infused substance, *gratia infusa*, stands at the base of its theology of justification as a process. Lutherans hold that justification is first of all a universal, world-embracing act and judgment of God in Christ, which is received by faith alone: "The first and chief article is this, that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, 'was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification' (Rom. 4:25)" (Smalcald Articles, II/I/1). "Indeed, the entire Gospel that we preach depends on the proper understanding of this article. Upon it all our salvation and blessedness are based, and it is so rich and broad that we can never learn it fully" (Large Catechism, Creed, Second Article, 33). The Formula of Concord (SD, III, 25) lists four "essential and necessary elements" of justification: 1. the grace of God; 2. the merit of Christ; 3. the Gospel; and 4. faith.³⁰ The first three constitute what has been called "general" or "universal" justification, which then becomes "personal" or "individual" justification when appropriated by faith (what the Apology calls *fides specialis* [personal faith]).³¹

Personal justification takes place by faith. God's justification of the world in Christ (universal justification) is prior to anyone's faith and constitutes its object and substance. All this is at best peripheral for the *Declaration*. Justification exemplifies the Lutheran understanding of all doctrine: grace means that God acts prior to faith. A parallel is the example of the Lutheran understanding of the Lord's Supper where Christ's bodily presence in the bread and wine is prior to our reception of it and

²⁹Apology XXIV, 90. The Mass cannot be a sacrifice for sin because it would be on par with Christ's death.

³⁰One may compare Apology IV, 53.

³¹ (The terms "objective" and "subjective," though sometimes used by Lutherans in this context, fit the Calvinist view more closely, which rejects *universal grace* and regards the "subjective" aspect of justification as the "experience" of it in one's soul or conscience.)

is not dependent on our faith. God justifies the world while it is still ungodly.³² Justification is a reality in Christ, and is therefore prior to anyone's reception of it by faith. It possesses an objective reality in God alone. Abraham believed in the God who justified the ungodly, Romans 4:3-5 (ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην . . . πιστεύοντι δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν δικαίου τὸν ἄσεβῃ λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην). God was justifying the ungodly before Abraham believed. The *Declaration* cites 1 Corinthians 1:30, "Christ is our righteousness," but does not unfold its christological content.

The *Declaration* speaks of justification in terms of *what it does, its effects* (the transformist view), and does not touch upon it as a divine accomplishment in Christ, as other commentators also note. Where Roman Catholics see justification as something happening in man (anthropological view), Lutherans see justification as accomplished in Christ (christological view). Atonement and objective justification are coterminous, but the latter is dependent and a result of the former. Justification is not an arbitrary decision of God that is accomplished by sovereign decree, but flows from God's regard for the work of Christ.³³ God justifies and He understands His act of justifying (justification) as His own saving accomplishment in Christ. So also *Outmoded Condemnations?* of the Göttingen faculty: "Corresponding to God's being God, **justification occurs through Christ alone (*solo Christo*)**, by grace alone (*sola gratia*), and in faith alone (*sola fide*)."³⁴ This justification in Christ is as *universally expansive* as is the divine condemnation of the world in Adam. In both the universal condemnation and justification, He is acting according to justice or righteousness. God's justification of the world in Christ must exceed His universal condemnation of the world in Adam. Without this belief, Christ's work becomes inferior to Adam's, a horrific

³²Pieper, *Dogmatik*, 2:631.

³³Theories of a limited atonement, that is, Calvin and the Reformed, operate with precisely this kind of deficiency in seeing atonement and justification as arbitrary acts of a sovereign God.

³⁴*Outmoded Condemnations*, 17 (emphasis added).

doctrine by all standards (Romans 5:15). God's universal acceptance of all of mankind in Christ is essential to the Lutheran doctrine that justification takes place in the blood of Christ, who, on this account, can be called our justification. Romans 5:9: "Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God." Universal justification does not imply the universalism of an *apokatastasis*, which makes personal participation in justification inconsequential. We quote from Hans Küng, "*All men are justified in Jesus Christ and only the faithful are justified in Jesus Christ. . . . In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's gracious saving judgment on sinful mankind is promulgated. . . . Here God pronounces the gracious and life giving judgment which cause the one just man to be sin and in exchange makes all sinners free in Him.*"³⁵

By contrast, justification for Rome is basically a grace-driven process in man. And it is this view that dominates the *Joint Declaration*. It is true that the strong Finnish representations succeeded in reshaping a previously bland, "anthropologically" orientated paragraph into an express confession of Trinitarian-Christological substance: "15. . . The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father. . ." Had this been the document's real starting point, rather than a decorative afterthought, the result might have been different. "Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness" is in need of development, but, as mentioned, this does not happen. Given the "transformist" commitments of the document, even noble Trinitarian-Christological language can do little more than remind us of the painful contrast between the confessional "ought" and the ecumenical "is."

³⁵ *Justification* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981) 223, 224.

6. Justification: Beyond "Law and Gospel" and Faith

Our response has taken advantage of critiques including the one offered by six Luther Seminary (ELCA) professors. They rightly point to the incompatibility between the *Declaration's* understanding of justification as an inner process of transformation and the Lutheran view of justification through faith alone (*sola fide*). But their stress on faith as "relational," especially without a clear affirmation of the incarnation and atonement, is itself misleading. Their polemic against "some contemporary Finnish Luther scholars" who "align justification with theosis through the idea that faith 'receives' Christ, and so divine life itself is 'imparted' to the person in justification" is valid, if it targets the mingling of justification and sanctification in that approach. On the other hand we could hardly disagree that God through Christ dwells in believers, especially through the Sacrament. Faith to be sure is "relational" but not as though in justification this faith were more than pure receptivity, the empty hand filled by the Person and Work of the God-Man.

It is a common Protestant error that faith justifies somehow also because of its own inherent value. Seeing faith as a substantive cause of the believer's justification is hardly different from the characteristic Roman fusion of justification with sanctification. Without Christ, faith is nothing. Listen to Luther in his *Galatians Commentary*.

But where they speak of love, we speak of faith. And while they say that faith is the mere outline [μονόγραμμα] but love is its living colors and completion, we say in opposition that faith takes hold of Christ and that He is the form that adorns and informs faith as color does the wall. Therefore Christian faith is not an idle quality or an empty husk in the heart. . . . But if it is true faith, it is a sure trust and firm acceptance in the heart. It takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object but, so to speak, the One who is present in the faith itself [*in ipsa fide Christus adest*]. . . . Therefore faith

justifies because it takes hold of and possesses this treasure, the present Christ. . . . Therefore the Christ who is grasped by faith and who lives in the heart is the true Christian righteousness, on account of which God counts us righteous and grants us eternal life.³⁶

Whereas the six ELCA theologians do not relate faith and justification to the atonement, Küng and several other Roman Catholic theologians recognize justification as an effect of Christ's universal atonement. For instance Meinertz, "The objective fact of justification is accomplished in the redemptive death of Christ, in connection, of course, with the resurrection. And so Rom. 5.9 can insist that we are justified in His blood, and by way of complement, in Rom. 4.25, that Christ was raised up for our justification."³⁷ Küng himself puts it like this:

On the one hand, the justification accomplished on the cross must not be separated from the process which reaches down to the individual man; this would in one way or another lead to apokatastasis. On the other hand, personal justification must not be separated from the

³⁶*Luther's Works*, 26:129-130. The response of the six ELCA theologians about "faith as trust in God's eschatological Word of promise" is too bare. Where is the full-blooded Lutheran stress on the life, death, and resurrection of the God-Man as alone-saving *object* of faith? The missing dimension here is that very *vicarious* (substitutionary) *satisfaction* of God's justice in Christ, which is criticized in various ways in *The Law-Gospel Debate: An Interpretation of Its Historical Development* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1968) by Gerhard Forde, one of the six St. Paul theologians. Rather than reject outright the Finns' plea for solid Trinitarian-Christological foundations, they ought to have acknowledged the intent, even while correcting the faulty implementation. Faith is "relational," but without express reference to God's concrete, historical act of righteousness in the cross and resurrection of His Son, the language is open to Barthian or Bultmannian interpretations. Eeva Martikainen's significant study of Luther's understanding of doctrine notes the proclivity of modern Luther scholarship for putting pale philosophical fancies, for example, "relational ontology," in the place of Luther's strong incarnational-doctrinal realism (*Doctrina: Studien zu Luthers Begriff der Lehre. Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft*, 26 0357-3087 [Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Gesellschaft, 1992], 15).

³⁷Küng, *Justification*, 226.

general act of justification on the cross; this would in one way or another lead to predestinationism. Rather both must be seen as the two sides of a single truth: *All* men are justified in Jesus Christ and only the *faithful* are justified in Jesus Christ.³⁸

Küng previously offered: "In reading texts which speak of justification in connection with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is striking to note that all of them referred emphatically to *faith* as well (for example, Rom. 4.5, 20-25)."³⁹ The *Joint Declaration* fails not simply in this or that detail of justification, but in terms of the "big picture."

7. Flawed Ecumenical Methodology

Tuomo Mannermaa traces the *Leuenberg Concord* to a fallacious distinction between a common "ground" or basis and differing modes of "expression." This approach is similar but not identical to G. Ebeling's scheme of distinguishing *fides justificans* from *fides dogmatica*.⁴⁰ Mannermaa sees a similar faulty pattern at work in the Ecumenical Working Group's 1986 *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?* which is "not the only text, in which the distinction of ground and expression, center and periphery, concern and formulation [*Anliegen und Ausgestaltung*] serves as hermeneutical key to the solution of the ecumenical problem."⁴¹

The *Joint Declaration* follows a similar pattern in distinguishing between the basic "concerns" or "intentions" and the actual doctrinal positions and formulations of Trent

³⁸Küng, *Justification*, 223.

³⁹Küng, *Justification*, 223.

⁴⁰Tuomo Mannermaa, *Von Preussen nach Leuenberg*. Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums. Neue Folge (Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1981), 1:48, 56-63.

⁴¹Tuomo Mannermaa, "Einig in Sachen Rechtfertigung? Eine lutherische und eine katholische Stellungnahme zu Jörg Baur," *Theologische Rundschau* 55 (1990): 327.

and the Book of Concord. First, terms like grace, faith, and justification are identified, but precise meanings give way to equivocations. Then the *Declaration* takes these ambiguities as proof of a "consensus on basic truths concerning the doctrine of justification," of which the differing theologies of the two churches are merely complementary and not contradictory expressions.⁴²

Setting aside the past condemnations on such grounds amounts simply to wishing them away. Understandably the *Declaration* cannot say that the past condemnations were simply wrong. Paragraph 42 puts it like this: "Nothing is thereby taken away from the seriousness of the condemnations related to the doctrine of justification. Some were not simply pointless. They remain for us 'salutary warnings' to which we must attend in our teaching and practice."

If "some" of the condemnations were "not simply pointless," were many or most of them "simply pointless" then? An earlier version of the *Declaration* had put it like this: "Nothing is thereby taken away from the seriousness of the condemnations related to the doctrine of justification. They did not simply or altogether miss the point. Where the basic consensus is not adhered to they still apply today. In this respect the mutual doctrinal condemnations remain 'important as salutary warnings.'"

The Church of Finland's response asked pointedly: "What does the formulation 'where the basic consensus is not adhered to' mean in concrete terms?" The final form of this point evidently follows the maxim: the less said the better.

Having referred to unresolved issues such as purgatory, indulgences, merit, satisfaction, sacrifice of the mass,

⁴²*A Commentary* (48) concedes as much: "The Catholic and Lutheran doctrines of justification do speak partially different languages, sometimes using different concepts, sometimes drawing different distinctions. Nevertheless, that which is common and fundamental is expressed in the JD in a common language." Somehow the second sentence contradicts the first.

invocation of saints, and monastic vows, Avery Dulles asks what it would mean to say that such matters are no longer church-divisive: "Does it imply that Lutherans may today teach and hold the doctrine of Trent and that Catholics are free to teach and hold the positions of the *Book of Concord* on the disputed points? If such freedom does not exist, the issues appear to stand in the way of full communion."⁴³ He then adds this eloquent plea:

In the present atmosphere Christians find it all too easy to declare that the doctrinal disagreements of the past have lost their church-divisive character. Pervasive though the present climate of agnosticism and relativism may be, Lutherans and Catholics must resist it. One of the most precious things we have in common may be our conviction that pure doctrine is crucially important and that ecclesial unity should not be purchased at the expense of truth. I sincerely hope that we can continue to learn from one another, appropriate one another's insights, and correct one another's oversights.⁴⁴

Though some have pointed out that the "mutual condemnations" in the Council of Trent and the Book of Concord are different, these differences must not be exaggerated. Gottfried Martens, in his *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders—Rettungshandeln Gottes oder historisches Interpretament*, criticizes the various justification dialogues precisely for reducing everything to historically variable expressions and interpretations. In fact the booklet *Ecumenism—The Vision of the ELCA: A Guide for Synods and Congregations*, captures the prevailing approach perfectly: "As Lutherans seek to enter into fellowship without insisting on doctrinal or ecclesiastical uniformity, they place an ecumenical emphasis on common formulation and expression

⁴³Dulles, "On Lifting," 220.

⁴⁴Dulles, "On Lifting," 220.

of theological consensus on the Gospel."⁴⁵ When Dulles observes that "Trent made no mention whatever of Luther or Lutherans," he is technically correct.⁴⁶ The fact is, however, as Jedin puts it, "The Tridentine decree on justification is the Church's authoritative answer to the teaching of Luther and the Augsburg Confession on grace and justification. The reformed doctrines of Zwingli and Calvin were only lightly touched upon in the course of the debate."⁴⁷

It is also true that the Lutherans specifically refused to include "entire churches" in their condemnations of error (Preface to the Book of Concord). When the ELCA theologians opine, however, "nor are Roman Catholics excluded by Lutherans from Lutheran fellowship, including Holy Communion, even to this day," they are indulging in an unhistorical, woolly ecumenism. The Formula of Concord, for example, understands the Smalcald Articles as having properly explained the Augsburg Confession, and given ample grounds "for having no communion with the papists, and for neither expecting nor planning to come to an understanding with the pope about these matters."⁴⁸

Despite the official Roman misrepresentations of justification, C. F. W. Walther cited Luther that the church has been preserved under the papacy because Roman Catholics have what Luther calls "Christ's ordinances and gifts": Baptism, the reading of Gospel in the vernacular, Absolution in private and public confession, the Sacrament of the Altar though it was administered at Easter and under one kind, the call or ordination to the pastoral office, and lastly prayer, the Psalms, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and many fine

⁴⁵*Ecumenism—The Vision of the ELCA: A Guide for Synods and Congregations* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), 22-23. A good antidote would be Martikainen, *Doctrina*.

⁴⁶Dulles, "On Lifting," 307. One could easily illustrate this in great detail, as is demonstrated in *Outmoded Condemnations?*

⁴⁷Jedin, *Trent*, 2:307.

⁴⁸FC, SD, Rule and Norm, 7.

hymns.⁴⁹ We can only be encouraged that in our country Roman Catholics are offered and many receive the Lord's Supper every Sunday and in many dioceses under both kinds.

Conclusion

We can do no better than to conclude with the judgment of our late president, colleague, and friend Robert Preus, whose timely book, *Justification and Rome*, has just been published by Concordia Publishing House:

The settlement is an amalgam of the old Lutheran and Roman Catholic definitions, or rather, a pasting together of the two disparate sets of definitions—sort of like a treaty. Neither side gives up its set of definitions and meanings. The treaty provides that the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic will no longer battle over words, meanings, and definitions, but each will keep his own.⁵⁰

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Richard E. Muller, *Secretary*

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⁴⁹ *The True Visible Church*, translated by J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 24-25.

⁵⁰ (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 1997), 103-104.

A Formula of Agreement: A Theological Assessment

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Prelude

The August 1997 assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) acted on three documents defining its relationship to three confessional families: the Roman Catholic Church, three Reformed churches, and the Episcopal Church. While the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* with the Roman Catholic Church addressed that one central truth, the documents proposed with the Reformed churches and the Episcopal Church were intended to establish full fellowship, allowing the clergy to preach and officiate and encouraging the laity to participate in the Eucharist in the others' churches. The Lutheran-Episcopal *Concordat*, which required new ordination procedures for the ELCA, failed by a handful of votes to meet the ELCA's two-thirds constitutional requirement (though attempts are now under way to reverse this rejection by revisions in the document). *A Formula of Agreement* with the three Reformed churches fared better and passed with an eighty-two percent majority. The Reformed signatories to *A Formula of Agreement* (henceforth called the *Agreement*) were the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC). In the Lutheran-Reformed "Proposal," attached as a preface to the *Agreement*, these churches are specifically called "the three Reformed churches," which identifies them as members of the family of churches descended from John Calvin, the Geneva reformer and a younger contemporary of Luther. Reformed (Calvinist) and Lutheran churches have historically differed most notably about the Lord's Supper, though even more fundamental differences exist between these two confessional families. Without in any way diminishing the significance of the Roman Catholic-Lutheran *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, the immediate results of the *Agreement* are for Lutherans more catastrophic, as even some

members of ELCA have seen both before and after their August 1997 assembly.

In the United States of America the *Agreement* brings to a climax Reformed attempts, reaching back as far as Zwingli's meeting with Luther at Marburg in October 1529, to let Reformed communicants participate in the Sacrament at Lutheran altars. Since then the Reformed have attempted to make formal intercommunion arrangements with Lutherans. They were eminently successful in the 1817 forced union of Lutheran and Reformed churches in Prussia, an arrangement adopted in other parts of Germany as well. By contrast, parallel attempts in America were voluntary.¹ In our century the formation of the Evangelical Church of Germany (*EKiD*, 1948) and the adoption of the *Leuenberg Concord* (1973) have further advanced Reformed inroads into Lutheran churches. Most recently the Porvoo Declaration (1996) allowed northern European Lutherans and Anglicans, historically a Reformed church, the same privileges now accorded each other by the signatories to the *Agreement*. We can hardly overestimate the seriousness of the *Agreement*. It signals a reversion to the position of Samuel S. Schmucker and a rejection of the great confessional tradition of Charles Porterfield Krauth. By the ELCA's surrender of what is characteristically Lutheran, all Lutheranism has been diminished. With penitent hearts for our frequent lack of gratitude for the gifts of the Reformation and with the full conviction and confession that the bread and wine

¹Donald H. Yoder outlines some of these efforts in "Lutheran-Reformed Union Proposals, 1800-1850: An Experiment in Ecumenics," *Bulletin of the Theological Seminary of the Evangelical and Reformed Church* 17 (January 1946): 39-77. Johann Probst's argument in *Die Wiedervereinigung der Lutheraner und Reformirten [sic]* (Allentown, PA: H. Ebner, 1826) is strikingly reminiscent of the *Agreement's* perspective. He writes: "To Christian people in general it is all the same over what other dogmas the preachers of former days quarreled in their publications. Such writings can only be of interest to scholars. All the old confessional writings have been brought about through particularly grievous and troublesome circumstances and are likewise with time become obsolete and have only historical value." Cited in Vergilius Ferm, *The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology* (New York: The Century Company, 1927), 48.

of the Sacrament are the very body and blood of Christ, we offer this assessment of the ELCA-Reformed *A Formula of Agreement*. It is our prayer "That pure we keep, till life is spent, Thy holy Word and Sacrament."

The Agreement

The *Agreement* acknowledges that the signatories "recognize each other as churches in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered according to the word of God."² In approving the others' position on the Lord's Supper, the central issue between the Lutheran and Reformed churches is accepted as settled. Lutherans differ from the Reformed on other doctrines: God, Christ, including the incarnation and atonement, Baptism, justification, sanctification, the purpose and goal of the Scriptures, election and the church.³ Differences on the Lord's Supper, which surfaced in the break between Luther and Zwingli at Marburg, have made this doctrine the most prominent. While the *Agreement* addresses the historical differences made explicit in the Reformation and post-Reformation confessions and other official documents of both churches,⁴ it really sets them aside as outmoded: "Furthermore, in the light of the radically changed world of the

²The *Agreement* assumes that a doctrinal consensus was achieved in *A Common Calling: The Witness of Our Reformation Churches in North America Today* (March 1992). Also cited in the *Agreement* as authoritative are *An Invitation to Action* (1981-1983), the *Leuenberg Concord*, and *Marburg Revisited* (1962-1966). Marburg was the site where Luther refused the hand of fellowship to Zwingli and is symbolical of the traditional Lutheran resistance to communion with the Reformed. The title *Marburg Revisited* suggests that this resistance has been overcome. The *Leuenberg Concord* claimed doctrinal unity among the established Lutheran and Reformed churches of Europe.

³The *Agreement* acknowledges "the differing 'accents' of Calvin and Luther on the relation of the church and word, Law and Gospel, the 'two kingdoms,' and the sovereignty of Christ." For Barth, as for Zwingli, the Law is very much a form of the Gospel.

⁴See for example The Four Visitation Articles of 1592, which has separate sections on "The False and Erroneous doctrines of the Calvinists" on the Lord's Supper, the Person of Christ, Baptism and Predestination and Providence of God. Friedrich Bente, "Historical Introduction," in *Concordia Triglotta: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, German-Latin-English* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 192, 217, 1150-57.

twentieth century, it was deemed inappropriate to defend or correct positions and choices taken in the sixteenth century, making them determinative for Lutheran-Reformed witness today." We add that they were found to be inappropriate by the Reformed already in the sixteenth century and by some American Lutherans in the nineteenth century. In other words, doctrinally defining documents are no longer binding as confessions. Here the Reformed understanding of confessions has won out over the Lutheran. Karl Barth described the Reformed view as a "timeless appeal to the open Bible and to the Spirit which from it speaks to our spirit." He continued:

Our fathers had good reason for leaving us *no* Augsburg Confession, authentically interpreting the word of God, *no* Formula of Concord, *no* "Symbolical Books" which might later, like the Lutheran, come to possess an odor of sanctity. They left us only *creeds*, more than one of which begin or end with a proviso which leaves them open to being improved upon in the future. The Reformed churches simply do *not* know the word dogma, in its rigid, hierarchical sense.⁵

This the traditional Reformed animosity to confessions and dogma, summed up so well by Barth, provides the spirit and content of the *Agreement*.

The ELCA's "confessional paragraph" seems to give pre-eminence to the Augsburg Confession. In itself, this would be no problem, since the Formula of Concord regards not itself but the Augsburg Confession as the "symbol of our epoch." Nor have strict Lutherans in the past questioned the orthodoxy of those who for historical reasons had no formal subscription to the Formula, but genuinely adhered to the Augsburg Confession. The ELCA, however, while acknowledging "the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord . . . as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church," merely "accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the

⁵Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, translated by Douglas Horton (New York: Harper, 1957), 229-230.

Gospel,"⁶ which latter alone is "confesse[d]." Given the ELCA's deliberate exclusion of biblical infallibility/inerrancy from its constitution, all further commitments rest on a slippery slope of relativism. Not surprisingly, "[t]he dispute now is not over anything so refined as the relationship of Law and Gospel. It is, just for starters, over what the Gospel is, whether there is any Law at all, and just who this necessary Christ might be."⁷

In evaluating the *Agreement*, our response takes advantage of the entire Book of Concord (1580), without in any way diminishing the primacy of the Augsburg Confession (1530), which is as anti-Reformed as the Formula of Concord (1577): "Of the Supper of the Lord it is taught thus, that the very body and blood of Christ are verily present under the form of bread

⁶This has long been the position of the General Synod branch of American Lutheranism. Milton Valentine writes under the heading "The Augsburg Confession Only" ("The General Synod," in *The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States*, 3rd edition (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1903], 41): "The General Synod does not include in its confessional basis any of the other writings that have been, to greater or less extent, accepted as doctrinal standards in some places, such as The Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Luther's Larger Catechism, the Smalkald Articles, and especially the Formula Concordiae." What is noteworthy in the case of the General Synod, though, is its militant attitude *against* the other confessions. About the Augsburg Confession itself, Valentine says "That in the differences of understanding and explanation that have always marked the interpretation of some of its statements, undisturbed liberty shall be enjoyed" (47). This is not surprising, however, when one considers the position of Samuel Schmucker, the nineteenth-century American Lutheran. He argued that *only* the Augustana was to be subscribed to, and only in so far as it confessed the fundamental articles of the Christian faith in a manner substantially correct. Schmucker also claimed that because many Lutherans had never subscribed to the other symbolical books, they could therefore not be considered confessionally binding. See "The Doctrinal Basis and Ecclesiastical Position of the American Lutheran Church," in *The American Lutheran Church, Historically, Doctrinally, and Practically Delineated*, 155-246 (Springfield, Ohio: D. Harbaugh, 1851). Of note is the significant step back from the position of Schmucker and Valentine by J. A. Singmaster. See "The General Synod," in *The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States*, 4th edition (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1914), 57-58.

⁷"Editor's Response," *Lutheran Forum* 29 (Lent 1995): 18.

and wine in the Supper, and are there distributed and received. Therefore also the contrary doctrine is rejected."⁸

Pivotal for the *Agreement* is the "*satis est consentire*" of Augustana VII: "For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments." In this article not only Lutherans, but also the Reformed, who do not accept the Augustana, find a basis for their alliance.

Adoption of the *Agreement* has an immediate effect in altering the confessional status of Augustana X, which was intended to exclude Zwinglian teaching. Even the Lutheran World Federation's Harding Meyer noted that acceptance of the *Leuenberg Concord* (1973), expressly approved by the *Agreement*, meant a major change in "Lutheran confessionality." It could "only mean that both churches no longer hold to the same position on certain points which had for a long time been considered important." For one thing, "the previous Lutheran insistence on the Unaltered Augsburg Confession" is given up.⁹ For the *Agreement*, then, the historic doctrinal differences between Lutherans and Reformed are no longer obstacles to fellowship between the churches at any level. Since the UCC makes no confession binding, historical precedent presents no obstacles.¹⁰

The ELCA's recognition that the sacraments are rightly administered in the Reformed churches puts the positions on the Lord's Supper of Zwingli, Calvin, Bullinger, Knox and other classic Reformed and Calvinist teachers, along with their traditional confessions like the *Consensus Tigurinus*,¹¹ the

⁸AC X, German, our translation.

⁹Harding Meyer, "The LWF and Its Role in the Ecumenical Movement," *Lutheran World* 20 (1973): 28-30.

¹⁰*The Statement of Faith*, adopted in 1959 by the United Church of Christ, makes no reference to the eternal generation of the Son, which denial is condemned by Augustana I.

¹¹It held that the body and blood were received spiritually and only bread and wine were received by the mouth. This was a result of the belief that Christ's body was locally contained in heaven and could not be on earth.

Second Helvetic Confession, the Belgic Confession and the Westminster Confession on an equal footing with what is confessed in the Book of Concord. Thus pastors and congregations who explicitly deny or deliberately avoid saying that the bread of the Sacrament is the body of Christ and the cup is the blood of Christ are now recognized by congregations of the ELCA as those among whom "the sacraments are rightly administered." This clearly disavows the teaching of the Lutheran Reformation (AC VII and X). In effect, the *Agreement* puts the doctrine of the Lord's Supper into the category of *adiaphora*, matters on which there may be disagreement without disrupting the unity of the faith and the church. It follows logically that the *Agreement* "withdraw[s] any historic condemnation by one side or the other as inappropriate for the life and faith of our churches today."¹² To cite a critique of the Roman Catholic-Lutheran *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*: "The document seems to hold to a hermeneutic that would have us believe that disagreements can be overcome if we will only agree that the disjunctive statements really" do not matter any more.¹³ Richard John Neuhaus, a former ELCA clergyman, refers to an article by Leonard Klein, a current ELCA clergyman, to offer this assessment: "In the larger world of ecumenical affairs, there has been much talk in recent years about 'reconciled diversity.' The idea is that differences once thought to be church-dividing may not be so, that unity does not mean uniformity, and so forth. 'What we have achieved with the Reformed,' writes Pr. Klein, 'true to the mood of the inclusive church, is unreconciled diversity.'"¹⁴

The Lutheran Confessions hold that the true body of Christ is present *in* or *under* the bread [*unter der Gestalt des Brots*] and

¹²"Preface," *Agreement*.

¹³Wording borrowed from Louis A. Smith, "Some Second Thoughts on the *Joint Declaration*," *Lutheran Forum* 31 (Fall 1997): 8. *A Common Calling* cites with approval and as an adequate authority the *Leuenberg Concord*, that the "condemnations expressed in the confessional documents no longer apply to the contemporary doctrinal positions of the assenting churches."

¹⁴"Here I Stand. And Here, and Here: The ELCA in Assembly," *First Things* 78 (December 1997): 72.

that this excludes the contrary Reformed position.¹⁵ Within the new frame of reference, opposing views are valued as equal approximations of the truth.¹⁶ Accordingly, the condemnations of the Lutheran Confessions against the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper are no longer operable and are therefore withdrawn. With this the Lutheran Confessions are relegated to the position of mere historical documents, which no longer can claim the exclusive right to articulate the faith of Lutherans in the ELCA. Thus ELCA congregations and pastors are incidentally and not necessarily Lutheran. The practical outcome of this new understanding is that pastors of the Reformed tradition, with their denial of the real presence of the Lord's body and blood in the Supper, are welcome to officiate at Lutheran altars and the Reformed laity are allowed to commune at these altars. In turn, Lutheran pastors and laity may celebrate and receive at Reformed tables.

Eucharistic hospitality is conceded by the Lutherans, not the Reformed. In this ecclesiastical treaty between the two great Reformation churches, the Lutherans and not the Reformed have made the accommodation in formally instituting mutual eucharistic hospitality. Already at Marburg Zwingli extended a eucharistic invitation to Luther, which the Reformed have continued to offer Lutherans with few exceptions in the

¹⁵See Formula of Concord VII, especially paragraph 33: "Sacramentarians and enthusiasts" who "will not believe that the Lord's bread in the Supper is his true, natural body, which the godless or Judas receive orally as well as St. Peter and all the saints. Whoever, I say, will not believe this, will please let me alone and expect no fellowship from me. This is final." This is no doubt why Bishop Perry at the closing convention of the Lutheran Church in America "calmly and explicitly repudiated Article Seven of the Formula" in the interests of the projected fellowship with the Reformed (*Forum Letter* [September 16, 1986]). Leonard Klein is quite right: "Lutheran and Reformed eucharistic doctrine and practice are not complementary but contradictory" ("Experiential Expressivism—The ELCA's August Assembly," *Forum Letter* [October 1997]: 4).

¹⁶Neuhaus, "Here I Stand," 72. "The proponents of fellowship with the Reformed repeatedly cited Calvin over the more radical Zwingli. Yet Calvin consistently stopped short of saying what Lutherans insisted upon, namely, that the bread and wine in the Eucharist is truly the body and blood of Christ."

intervening four centuries. In the case of the Prussian Union this invitation was legally enforced by penalties against Lutherans who conscientiously objected to it. The *Agreement* calls on the Reformed to keep on doing what they have always done and requires the Lutherans to do what they have historically refused to do. Concession is totally on the Lutheran side.

Since the ELCA has long practiced open communion (the former American Lutheran Church had full fellowship with the Reformed [1986]), the *Agreement* with the Reformed hardly represented a real crisis for them. It received an eighty-two percent approval vote.¹⁷ Subscription by ELCA congregations and pastors to the Augustana—for some this may include one or more of the other Confessions, something that may differ from congregation to congregation—has been replaced by the *Agreement* requiring a practice that is contrary to the Confessions. This situation is most serious for pastors, who must now act contrary to their ordination vows. Here is a parallel to the Prussian Union.¹⁸ The renunciation of the Confessions becomes most evident in the ELCA's recognition of the UCC, which, in its blending of Congregational, Baptist, Reformed, and Evangelical (Lutheran-Reformed) churches into one denomination, long ago gave up any concept of confessional subscription.¹⁹

¹⁷At least some confusion over the issue is demonstrated by the absurd statement of ELCA columnist Clark Morpew: "An Episcopal bishop . . . is believed to have the power to make Christ present in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Lutheran bishops have never been given that power" (*Fort Wayne News-Sentinel* [May 16, 1997])!

¹⁸Hermann Sasse, *Union and Confession: Christ and His Church*, translated by Matthew C. Harrison (Saint Louis, Missouri: Office of the President of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1997), 38.

¹⁹This is frankly admitted by Robert W. Jenson ("The August 1997 Assembly of the ELCA," *Pro Ecclesia* VI [Fall 1997]: 389-90): "The supposedly confessional ELCA was able to enter full fellowship with the United Church of Christ even though it knows that this partner is unable to commit itself creedally or liturgically and was again so informed by the United Church representative at the assembly." For specific information on the United Church of Christ, see Arthur Carl Piepkorn, *Profiles in Belief*, 4 volumes (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 2:664-74.

The *Agreement* has meaning for ELCA laity. They are urged to participate in communion services led by Reformed ministers in Lutheran or Reformed churches. In both instances they may hear a liturgical formula in the distribution of the Lord's Supper that is different and even contrary to what they have been accustomed to hearing in a Lutheran service. Such liturgical ritual has doctrinal implications, because it either confesses or does not confess the truth. What is distributed in such situations may in fact be no Sacrament at all. The Reformed have never gone beyond seeing the Sacrament as anything more than a form of the Word to which faith responds to make the sacramental action complete.

Without formally disowning the historic doctrinal documents, the *Agreement* provides a new operative statement for understanding the Lord's Supper, which for all practical purposes can only be regarded as an interpretative confession: "while neither Lutheran nor Reformed profess to explain *how* Christ is present and received in the Supper, both churches affirm that 'Christ himself *is* the host at the table . . . and that Christ himself *is* fully present and received in the Supper.'" ²⁰ This expresses the traditional Reformed view of the Lord's Supper. Granted, we can no more know the "how" (method) of the real presence than we can know the "how" of the incarnation. Yet, identifying "where" Christ is, as well as "what" is present and received in the Supper, is exactly what the Lutheran Confessions do. He is present in the bread and the wine in such a way that, by virtue of sacramental union, bread and wine *are* actually His body and blood. These are received specifically by the mouth (*manducatio oralis*) and not merely by faith. Unbelievers, too, receive the true body and blood with the mouth (*manducatio indignorum*), since by definition they have no faith at all. Thus reception of the Sacrament by faith is dependent first on Christ's presence in the elements and then on

²⁰This phraseology is taken into the *Agreement* from James E. Andrews and Joseph A. Burgess, editors, *An Invitation To Action: The Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue Series III 1981-1983* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), but the emphasis and ellipsis were added by the writers of the *Agreement* and not the presenters of this critique.

our receiving Him with our mouths. Lutherans have insisted that the bodily reception of Christ exists apart from and independently of faith. Christ is actually sacramentally present before and apart from faith. Faith does not make or contribute to the Sacrament, but faith is created and confirmed and responds to Christ in the Sacrament (AC XIII).²¹ This is the whole point of the *manducatio indignorum* and the *manducatio oralis*. Formula of Concord VII confesses this as the teaching of the Augustana, the Wittenberg Concord (1536), and the Great Confession (1528) of Martin Luther, who understood the Augustana better than anyone else (FC, SD VII, 33).

At first glance, it might appear that, even though Lutherans and Reformed have differences on how the sacramental elements are to be understood, they do have a common understanding about Christ being the host at the table, and they can affirm that He is fully present and received in the Supper. This is a totally false assumption. The Reformed see the Spirit and not Christ as the real giver of the Sacrament. They are forced into this position by their doctrine of Christ's human nature, which does not and cannot receive and is not affected by the divine nature (*genus maiestaticum*). Their doctrine of the local session of Jesus at God's right hand is a logical conclusion of their Christology. Though they teach that the divine nature is permanently attached to the human nature, that human nature is confined to heaven and is not present on earth. Thus Lutherans and Reformed have a different understanding of what it means that Christ is the host of the Lord's Supper. For the Reformed Christ does not really give His body and blood in the bread and wine.²²

²¹ "sacramenta instituta sint, . . . ad excitandam et confirmandam fidem, in his qui utuntur, . . ." So Christ's bodily presence in sacramental bread and wine precedes faith and reception of it.

²² We are not alone in our observation that the *Formula of Agreement* is Calvinistic. Michael J. Root, formerly with the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, and recently appointed to the ELCA faculty of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio, notes that "The Formula clearly excludes a Zwinglian reading of the Supper and states that Christ gives himself to all who receive the elements" (*Forum Letter* 27 [March 1998]: 4). At issue

Any discussion of Christ's presence in His human nature of course brings up the thorny issue of the historical Jesus, whose bodily resurrection is often denied or "reinterpreted" among both liberal Lutherans and liberal Reformed. This redefinition has been going on since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and was reinforced by the nineteenth-century "quest for the historical Jesus." Though the first two "quests" were declared dead, a third "quest" has resurrected the search.²³ Such a "quest" was unknown during the Reformation, when all parties to the dispute believed in the resurrection, even though the Reformed had their own peculiar views about the confinement of Christ's body to a place in heaven. Marc Lienhard, of the LWF's Ecumenical Institute in Strasbourg, informs us that the historical-critical approach to the Bible, which had made possible the *Leuenberg Concord*, had also made it impossible in the Arnoldshain Theses (a precursor to *Leuenberg*) "to connect the institution of the Lord's Supper with the night in which he

here, however, is not Zwingli's, but Calvin's view, as rightly noted by ELCA clergyman, Russell E. Saltzman, the editor of *Forum Letter*. "As we have read it, the trouble with the *Formula* is not what it says, but what it does not say. It never says plainly that what is given and received in the Supper is the Lord's body and blood. This was of course the same problem Calvin had, how to say as much as possible about the Supper without finally ever saying it is the Lord's body and blood. '[W]e must establish such a presence of Christ in the Supper,' so he wrote in his *Institutes*, 'as may neither fasten him to the element of bread, nor enclose him in bread, nor circumscribe him in any way. . . . 'Careful reading shows the *Formula* accomplishing just that. 'Imparts himself in his body and blood,' to quote *Leuenberg* quoted in the *Formula*, is not nearly as distinct as 'gives himself in his body and blood,' just as an example. The *Formula* is a very good attempt at grappling with the Real Presence, but unless we and the Reformed are both speaking of the elements as that 'body born of Mary' (*LBW* #215), then ultimately we are speaking of different things. We agree, the *Formula* is not 'feel good' ecumenism, which is why a number of us feel worse for it." *Lutheran Book of Worship* #215 is Luther's eucharistic hymn "O Lord, We Praise You," in which the Reformer confesses the identity of the sacramental gift with the body born of the Virgin Mary and crucified under Pontius Pilate (*TLH* 313; *LW* 238). We concur with Pastor Saltzman that the *Formula of Agreement* presents Calvin's and not Luther's position.

²³ *The Jesus Seminar* is the best known, but its determining truth by ballot may relieve it of scholarly credence.

was betrayed."²⁴ This renders meaningless the *Agreement's* citation from the *Leuenberg Concord* that "in the Lord's Supper the risen Christ imparts himself in his body and blood . . ."

Such language as "Christ himself *is* host at his table" is wrong-headed for at least two reasons.²⁵ Some twentieth century New Testament scholars, most recently Willi Marxsen, claim that after Jesus' death, early Christians believed He was present *at* the table and later *on* the table. Again it is not a matter of presence, but *where* that presence is. Gradually a simple Protestant table became a catholic altar. This is a word game with prepositions and could be dismissed, if it were not so serious a matter with dire consequences for the Church's faith. Similarly, this kind of thinking sees early Christians as moderate unitarians who later evolved into Trinitarians and prepared the way to Rome. The Germans call this doctrinal evolution the *Katholizisierung* of Christian doctrine. Secondly, the word *is* belongs to the bread and the cup, not to the host.²⁶

In certain places the *Agreement* seems consciously to follow Melancthon, who attached Christ's presence to the liturgical action and not to the elements as did Luther. Consider the inclusion of this citation from the *Leuenberg Concord*: "We cannot separate communion with Jesus Christ in his body and blood from the act of eating and drinking."²⁷ Certainly Christ is

²⁴Marc Lienhard, *Lutherisch-Reformierte Kirchengemeinschaft Heute. Ökumenische Perspektiven Nr. 2* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, Verlag Joseph Knecht, 1972), 54, our translation.

²⁵Emphasis is in original.

²⁶It might go too far to suggest that the authors of the *Agreement* were engaging in deception in using the word *host*, which can refer to the person at the head of the table and to the sacramental bread. The former comes from the Latin *hospis* and means one who entertains; the latter from the Latin *hostia* and means the sacrificial victim.

²⁷Ernst Sommerlath, "Die kommende Kirche? Anfragen zum Leuenberger Konkordienentwurf aus der DDR," in *Von der Wahren Einheit der Kirche: Lutherische Stimmen zum Leuenberger Konkordienentwurf*, 185, herausgegeben von Ulrich Asendorf und Friedrich Wilhelm Künneth (Berlin und Schleswig-Holstein: Verlag Die Spur GmbH & Co., 1973): "Klar scheint mir aber zu sein, daß die Frage, ob die Kommunikanten beim Abendmahl Christi Leib und Blut essen und trinken, von der LKE verneint wird." ["It seems clear

present in the ritual (act), but identifying *what was eaten and drunk was the historical point of contention between Lutherans and Reformed*.²⁸ It is simply not true, therefore, that Lutherans and Reformed agreed about the *fact* of the "Real Presence," and differed only about the "mode."²⁹ Nor is it true, as the former American Lutheran Church was assured in preparation for its acceptance of full communion with the Reformed in 1986, that Lutheran teaching excludes only Zwingli, but not Calvin's "spiritual presence," since "both Lutherans and Calvinists ardently affirm the reality of Christ's presence in the sacrament."³⁰

to me that the question whether the communicants eat and drink the body and blood of Christ at the Lord's Supper is answered negatively by the *Leuenberg Concord*."]

²⁸Lutherans in no way want to deny that the Sacrament is the work of the Holy Spirit who alone gives all good gifts to the church, including and especially the Sacraments. The Reformed assigning the Lord's Supper to the Holy Spirit should not force us into denying that the Lord's Supper is as much a Trinitarian gift fully involving the Holy Spirit as it is a christological one. After all it is the Father who invites us to the Supper of His Son and so He is properly addressed in all the eucharistic prefaces: "It is truly meet, right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee, Lord God, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, . . ." Through the Father's invitation and the Son's gift the Spirit works in the sacramental elements and creates and confirms faith in the heart. This activity of the Spirit is specifically associated with the presence of Christ in the bread and not with some parallel, disconnected working in the heart. In this sacrament as in the incarnation, He is acknowledged and worshiped as *Creator Spiritus*.

²⁹So for instance Andrews and Burgess, editors, *An Invitation To Action*, 114-115; and Walter Wietzke, "With Our Closest Kin," *The Lutheran Standard* (July 11, 1986): 9-11. While numerous Reformed proponents of this argument could be cited, we will refer only to John W. Nevin's "The Lutheran Confession," (*Mercersburg Review* 1 [September 1849]: 470): "In particular, we are not able at all to accept Luther's idea of Christ's presence in the eucharist. With Calvin, and the Heidelberg Catechism, we hold the mystery itself, and abhor the rationalistic frivolity by which it is now so commonly denied; but the *mode* of it we take to be such as fairly transcends all local images and signs" (emphasis in original).

³⁰Wietzke, 9. Ernst Sommerlath, the long time editor of the distinguished *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, made a similar critique against the Arnoldshain Theses, which prepared the way for the *Leuenberg Concord*. The participants were agreed that Christ was the subject of the sacramental action, "But nowhere is it said, that he gives his body and blood in the elements."

Augustana X's condemnation clause had Zwingli in view. Calvin had not yet appeared, and so could not have been in the minds of Luther, Melancthon, and the other reformers and princes. However, Calvin and not Zwingli was the foremost target of the condemnations of Formula of Concord VII, which meant to safeguard the true sense of Augustana X (FC SD VII, 41-42). True, the *Agreement* does not reflect Zwingli's radical teaching that Christ is not present in the Sacrament. Yet the milder version, which let the Reformed "speak of the presence of Christ in the community gathered by the Holy Spirit,"³¹ is no more allowed by the Augustana than is nineteenth-century Unitarianism by Article I, which condemns fourth-century Eunomians. Confessional subscription for Lutherans means that after the historical condemnations are acknowledged and accepted, they continue to be applicable to the church's current situation. The Apology (1531), the Treatise (1537), and the Formula (1577) do precisely this for the Augustana (1530). By making the condemnations inoperable, the purpose of the Lutheran Confessions *qua* confessions is abandoned, so at best they represent only what certain churches *historically* believed. Confessional subscription is rendered meaningless. Not to be cynical, but can we ask whether the condemnations against the Arians and Muhammadans are still operative (AC I)? Or are we faced with *selective confessional condemnation*?³²

"Stellungsnahmen unter Gesichtspunkten der Lehre and des Bekenntnisses," *Lehrgespräch Über das Heilige Abendmahl*, edited by Gottfried Niemeier (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1961), 79 (our translation).

³¹ *Christianity Today* 41 (October 16, 1997): 81.

³² A certain pre-history here inspires little confidence: A 1980 article in *Lutheran World Report* by John Reumann, of the former LCA, had argued that the whole traditional Christology from Nicaea and Chalcedon to Article III of the Augsburg Confession is untenable in light of historical-critical scholarship. Thereupon the LCMS resolved in 1981 to request the Division of Theological Studies of the former Lutheran Council in the USA (LCUSA) to take up "as a matter of urgency a thorough discussion of the far-reaching implications of historical criticism, as practiced in U.S. Lutheranism, for: a) the central, Christological-Trinitarian core of the Gospel; b) the very possibility of confessional subscription; c) the preamble of LCUSA's constitution, according to which the participating Lutheran church bodies . . . see in the Ecumenical Creeds and in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church . . . a pure exposition of

Sundry Items

(1) Each church's acceptance of the other's Baptism is no major breakthrough and plays no major role in the *Agreement*, but perhaps it should have. The Reformed neither believe nor practice emergency Baptism for infants and presumably also for adults. So Lutheran parents whose children are in danger of death should not expect a Reformed pastor serving their congregation to be overly concerned.³³ Also, Lutherans may not be aware that Reformed and Presbyterian churches often welcome Baptist ministers to their pulpits. Ministers of either confession can serve as regular pastors of the churches of the other denomination. Reformed and Baptists differ over the method of administering Baptism and at what age it should be administered, but are agreed that Baptism does not work regeneration. So a Lutheran attending a Reformed church might find himself receiving what purports to be the Lord's Supper from a Baptist who denies that children are morally accountable because of original sin or capable of faith and salvation through Baptism. At stake here are Augustana II and IX.

(2) The *Agreement* notes that "ordinations in both traditions have usually been by presbyters," but acknowledges that one person as a bishop may act in behalf of presbyteries and synods. This may not be a significant issue for the presenters of this critique, but one cannot help note that the likely to be revived ELCA *Concordat* with the Episcopal Church requires ordination

the Word of God" (1981 LC-MS *Proceedings*, 160).

Five years later, and shortly before it expired, the Division of Theological Studies issued a thin leaflet on historical criticism with a few points of agreement and disagreement, but stating that time had "not permitted" it to deal "with the implications of historical criticism for Christology, justification, and confessional subscription, which are taken up in the Reumann article." But readers were assured that even where "sharp disagreement" had arisen, this "nevertheless did not destroy our sense of oneness in Christ"!

Lienhard, incidentally, points out that when the *Leuenberg Concord* speaks of the "collapse of traditional thought-forms," this refers to "the two-natures doctrine and the doctrine of the communication of attributes" (107).

³³Sasse, *Union and Confession*, 25.

by a bishop and consecration of ELCA bishops by Episcopal bishops.

(3) Ordination of women as pastors (ministers; presbyters) is not a problem for fellowship between churches, except for a few like the Missouri Synod and the Roman Catholic Church, and is simply taken for granted in the *Agreement*.

(4) Any differences on justification are put simply to the side: "there are no substantive matters concerning justification that divided us." This conclusion is based on defining justification as "forgiveness of sins and renewal of life." The Roman Catholic-ELCA *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* may be more elaborate, but comes to the same definition, a matter to be left to another time.

Conclusion

The signatories to the *Agreement* were fully aware of the historic differences among themselves and agreed to accept each other's positions without correction. What was once considered false doctrine by one party or the other is now understood as "mutual misunderstanding and misrepresentation" and "complementary rather than contradictory." In this new situation Lutheran and Reformed doctrines are considered traditions, that is, they are historic beliefs with no necessary binding significance for contemporary churches. Confessions have no more value than other historical documents.

The ELCA-Reformed alliance is not without precedent. Lutheran churches have gone out of existence by putting other documents or arrangements in the place of the Lutheran Confessions. Sasse saw the Prussian Union (1817) as the most notorious, but he also saw the formation of the Evangelical Church in Germany (1948) as an umbrella organization in the same light. This was taken one step further by the *Leuenberg Concord*, a foundation document for the *Agreement*, which claimed that the historic Lutheran and Reformed positions on the Lord's Supper simply represented different strands of the

New Testament.³⁴ By effectively putting Reformed and Lutheran Confessions on a par in the *Agreement*, the ELCA has changed and denied its confessional base and has ceased to be Lutheran in both a confessional and a historic sense. This is in keeping with the global unionism embraced and advocated by the Lutheran World Federation's ecumenical program of "Reconciled Diversity" (1977): the various churches enter into full communion with one another while keeping their former confessions—minus the condemnations. Did theologians invent "postmodernism" before it became a secular fashion?

David P. Scaer, *Chairman*

Kurt E. Marquart

Richard E. Muller, *Secretary*

William C. Weinrich, *Adjunct*

Lawrence R. Rast Jr., *Adjunct*

³⁴For Lienhard whether or not "*est*" can be understood as "*significat*" is not capable of being exegetically resolved (54). He refers to Eduard Schweitzer who finds Palestinian tradition of the New Testament perpetuated in Reformed views and Hellenistic tradition in Lutheran views, (*Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* [1:18]). The uncertainty over the meaning of "*is*" apparently does not apply to the *Agreement's* own reference: "Christ himself *is* host at his table." Would they allow, "Christ is signified [as] Host at the Table"? Both Lienhard and Schweitzer work with an evolutionistic understanding of the New Testament in which the simpler Jewish beliefs developed into more complex Greek ones. The Lutheran understanding of the Lord's Supper is judged to resemble the more advanced Greek (also known as the catholic) form. For a proper understanding of the *Leuenberg Concord*, Tuomo Mannermaa's painstaking *Von Preussen Nach Leuenberg: Hintergrund und Entwicklung der theologischen Methode in der Leuenberger Konkordie* (Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums. Neue Folge Band I. Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1981) is simply indispensable. It is the first and perhaps the only "historical-critical" study of Leuenberg, in the sense that it examines the historical roots and the development of the methodology behind that document. Without oversimplifying the complexity of the argument, it may be said that the operative principle of Leuenberg turns out to be a distinction between "justifying faith" and "dogmatical faith," such that the "theological explication of faith" comes in the end to be classified with the "human rites and ceremonies" of AC VII, agreement in which is not necessary for the true unity of the church (see pages 62-63).

Lutheran Liturgies from Martin Luther to Wilhelm Löhe

Vernon P. Kleinig

Edward Gibbon once remarked that we are surprised by the timidity, rather than scandalized by the freedom, of the first Protestant Reformers. Perhaps more than anywhere else, it is in Luther's attitude toward the liturgy that we see the conservative and constructive nature of his Reformation. Thus it is more accurate to speak of Luther's modification, rather than his abolition of traditional worship. Luther's practice in this area is more conservative than his theory, for he never put into practice some of his more imaginative ideas. He never used iconoclastic methods, preferring to instruct people on the reasons for change before altering anything. His reluctance to change things here is significant, since normally he was quick to act. Because of his pastoral concern not to upset and unnecessarily confuse the faith and piety of the common people, he shrank from innovation and sensationalism. As late as 1523 he was content simply to use sermons to wean people from unevangelical attitudes toward worship.

As early as his pre-Reformation days, in a sermon on the Third Commandment, Luther emphasized hearing the Word of God as the most important part of worship. Here he made his famous distinction between the sacramental and sacrificial parts of worship—a distinction that has proven decisive for Lutheran liturgical theory ever since. In 1518-1519, in his writings on the Lord's Supper, Luther developed some of his positive thoughts about the importance of the *koinonia* (fellowship) aspects of the sacrament: "This is a sacrament of love. As love and support are given you here, so you must in turn render support and love to Christ in his needy ones."¹ Many of his statements are

¹Martin Luther, "The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods," in *Luther's Works*, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut J. Lehmann, (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing

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reminiscent of the *Didache* and the writings of the early fathers of the Church.

In his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), he criticizes the Medieval Mass. Of particular note are his violent attacks on the Mass as a sacrifice and good work, private masses, and the silent recitation of the canon. Here he articulates a fundamental principle, which was a logical outcome of his strong view of the Eucharist as a feast of fellowship with Christ and one's fellow communicants: no celebration of the Lord's Supper without communicants.²

Luther particularly reacted against taking Communion lightly, that is, without confession. And so in sermons in the following years, he stresses the prerequisites for worthy and proper reception of the Sacrament. Next to the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, the Lord's Supper is the theme on which Luther spends most of his time writing, because the sacrament *is* the Gospel. His lifelong defense of the real presence of Christ's body and blood in Holy Communion is a defense of the Gospel. In all his liturgical work, Luther is concerned with theology as right praise of God. He understands orthodoxy as correct worship of the triune God. Correct theology is the true praise of God. This ties in with his contention that there always be a unity and congruity between *form* and *content*. This congruity, which he especially tried to achieve in his hymns, is part of the reason for their success. Luther felt that the question of doctrine must always remain in the center, and that the best way of doing so was by relating it to worship. The dogma of the church is to be made concrete in its liturgy. Worship is theocentric. God and worship belong inseparably together. God is in the center of Christian worship, with His acting, giving and

House and Fortress Press, 1955-72), 35:54. Further references to Luther will be to this edition and will abbreviated *LW*.

²In order to understand Luther's violent reaction to the abuses of the late Medieval Mass, it is perhaps worthwhile to consider the Council of Trent's own list of its abuses: too many priests speaking simultaneously, too few communions being made, rival Corpus Christi processions, and the difficulty of hearing what was being said above the noise of the peasants' animals inside the church.

speaking. Faith is not something internal, but expresses itself in worship.

Luther's criticism of existing ceremonies stems not from indifference to liturgical forms, but from a pastoral desire for consciences cramped and burdened by excess. He sees forms as indispensable; the only choice is between a good or bad liturgy. Luther states that ceremonies are added to worship, for spiritual matters cannot be administered without external ceremonies. The five senses and the whole body have their gestures and rituals, under which the body must live as though under some sort of mask. We would call Luther's approach an evangelical-catholic one.³ He believes that unless God should provide a better liturgy, the Church must stick as closely as is evangelically possible to the liturgies of its past. Worship can and must express some continuity with the Church of the past, since the Gospel had never completely vanished from it. In short, Luther always remained closer to Rome than to the more radical reformers who wanted to discard the historic church: "Sooner than mere wine with the fanatics, I would agree with the pope that there is only blood."⁴

Luther did not rush in with his own liturgy, because it would too easily become the slogan and badge of a particular group. He wanted each region to draw up its own worship order according to its local needs, rather than have every region uniformly use one dictated by him. Luther argued that forms are beneficial precisely if they are not made totally essential. One's decision regarding which form to use is to be determined by the needs of weaker church members.⁵

Karlstadt and Muntzer's hastily produced and theologically flawed revisions compelled Luther to act. The result was the

³The American theologian, Paul Tillich, uses the terms "catholic substance" and "protestant principle" to explain Luther's approach here.

⁴"Confession Concerning Christ's Supper," *LW* 37:317.

⁵In this way Luther was more traditional than either the "high" or "low" church positions of today. Both groups strongly believe that the present practices in their church are unsatisfactory.

Formula Missae (1523), which was far more influential than others because it was both more conservative and more creative.

Luther viewed the *Formula Missae* as an experimental, interim work. It shows that he found room for some experimentation in worship, though at times it is not well thought through. Yet, as he himself admits: "we must dare something in the name of Christ!" He continues: "It has never been our intention to abolish the liturgical service of God completely, but rather to purify the one that is now in use. . ."⁶ He does not even view it necessary to work on any other than the rite being used at Saint Mary, Wittenberg, since his reform is intended only for his region.

Luther expresses an uneasiness about a "moralistic" bias in the pericopal selections of the ancient church. He continues to use them, however, including most of the ancient introits, collects, and prayers. He holds that the sermon can correct any deficiencies in the lectionary (he generally preached on the standard gospel for the day). The whole service is to be over within an hour (so as not to strain people too much). Graduals longer than two verses are to be sung at home, so as not to quench the spirit of the faithful with tedium. For the Introit, Luther suggests using the whole Psalm; for the Kyrie, the various different melodies of the church year are to be retained; the *Gloria in Excelsis* may be omitted on non-festal days, or a hymnic version substituted. Of the collects, only one is to be used each service. The lessons are to be chanted, and the use of gospel candles and incense is made optional. The Creed is to be sung. The "Alleluia," since it is the perpetual voice of the church, is not to be omitted during Lent. Concerning the sermon, Luther suggests it may be preached before the whole service, since the Gospel is a voice crying in the wilderness, calling unbelievers to faith. Regarding the preparation of the elements for the celebration of Holy Communion, Luther prefers pure wine, because it symbolizes the purity of the Gospel.

⁶"An Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg," *LW* 53:20.

Luther's recension of the Canon of the Mass is more controversial. How much Luther can be held responsible for breaking up the unity of the eucharistic prayer and how much late medieval additions had already destroyed its unity is debatable. Luther admitted there were sacrificial aspects of the Eucharist. However, he judges Roman Catholicism's stress on the Eucharist as "a good work we offer to God" to be totally wrong.⁷ In his *Treatise on the New Testament*, Luther states: "it is not we who offer Christ, but Christ who offers us. . . . We offer ourselves as a sacrifice along with Christ . . . he takes up our cause . . . and offers himself for us in heaven. . . . We offer our whole selves, our need, praise and thanks in Christ and through Christ; and thereby (through faith) we offer Christ to God, that is, we move Christ and give him occasion to offer himself for us and to offer us with himself."⁸ Because it was offered silently, Luther could omit most of the Canon of the Mass without upsetting the people.

Luther did not remove as many of the sacrificial elements from the Mass as it is sometimes stated.⁹ From this point on, however, the Words of Institution become the center of focus, and the emphasis in the Lord's Supper shifts from what the church does, to what God gives to the recipient. Luther Reed gives a lengthy analysis of Luther's recension and sums up the present attitude of the Lutheran Church regarding a Eucharistic Prayer.¹⁰ One can only conclude that Luther was inconsistent in wanting, at this point, to have only the bare literal words of Christ, when he could so freely and often, paraphrase the Our Father. What he failed to see is that Christ's words here are more a formula for distribution than a consecration, and that Christ's "blessing" and "giving thanks" does seem to require

⁷Noteworthy in connection with the Sacraments, is the fact that the Council of Trent itself used the word *sacrifice* with thirteen different meanings.

⁸"*Treatise on the New Testament, That Is the Holy Mass*," LW35:99.

⁹For example, he retained the Gloria, prayers, Sanctus, Benedictus, Hosanna, Agnus Dei, and Nunc Dimitis.

¹⁰Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947), 317-337. It must be noted that versions of *The Lutheran Liturgy*, though having the same copyright date, vary in pagination.

some further expansion and elaboration. But such was Luther's influence that until recently the majority of Lutheran liturgies have followed his recension. It certainly invested the eucharistic words of Jesus with an altogether new and solemn dignity. But it led the Lutheran laity to see the saying of the Words of Institution as the precise moment of change.¹¹

Luther retained the Preface and Propers appropriate to the season of the church year, but differed from the traditional order by placing the Sanctus after the Words of Institution. The reason for the shift is that the Sanctus (with Benedictus) suggests that the Real Presence has already occurred.¹² During the Sanctus the bread and wine is to be elevated according to the rite in use. Unlike the more radical reformers, Luther retains the elevation, but gives it an evangelical interpretation: it is elevated towards us, not God, to remind us of His Covenant, and to incite us to faith in the Sacrament. In terms of Romans 12, it reminds us that we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God. It was only in 1542 that the elevation was finally omitted in Wittenberg. The "Peace" is said facing the people after praying the Our Father. During the singing of the Agnus Dei, the minister communes himself, and then the people.¹³ After the Distribution, the Benedicamus and seasonal alleluia is sung, and the service closes with the Aaronic Blessing or Psalm 67:6—"God, our God, has blessed us."

¹¹Reed notes (*The Lutheran Liturgy*, 334): "Luther at first regarded the Verba as an announcement to the congregation. This idea is also frequently expressed in the Formula of Concord and the writings of the later dogmaticians. After 1523, however, Luther certainly viewed the Verba as words of consecration, referring to them as *Benedictio* (blessing) in the *Formula Missae* of that year and as *das Amt und Dermung* (Consecration) in the German Mass of 1526. In a letter to Carlstadt in 1527 Luther expresses his belief that the recitation of the Verba over the elements marks the consummation of the sacramental union."

¹²There is some tension, for according to his thinking this happened only with the Words of Institution.

¹³On Luther's views of pastoral self communion, one may see Toivo Harjunpaa, "The Pastor's Communion," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 52 (April-July 1988): 149-167.

Luther insists that Holy Communion not be distributed indiscriminately. Those desiring communion must personally request to receive it, so that the pastor can ascertain their understanding and the state of their daily relationships with others. Luther wants those communing to come forward into the chancel, before the Preface, as a witness to everyone. Participation in Holy Communion is an act of Christian confession. In conclusion, Luther believes that once a new order is adopted, changes in it should be kept to a minimum, to avoid confusing people unnecessarily.

All the choir parts of Luther's 1523 Mass were in Latin. Over time pressure induced Luther to produce a totally vernacular rite. He was slow in writing a fully vernacular liturgy because he was musically astute enough and linguistically sensitive enough to know that more is involved than just translating texts. German requires a totally different melody. Luther spent the next years preparing music and texts with his musicians, Walter and Rupsch, working especially on chants for the lessons. Because the final note is monosyllabic in German, the final notes in the Introit need to differ from Latin. Luther suggests using the eighth tone for the epistle, since St. Paul is serious, but the sixth tone for the gospel, since Christ's sayings are pleasant. The Words of Institution are to be chanted in the same tone, to impress on people that these are sheer Gospel. There is a great difference between the syllabic song of the Germans, and the melismatic song of the Mediterranean peoples. Gregorian chant can, for example, be sung with more notes on one syllable. Luther tried to stay as close as possible to the German folk-song form. His meticulous work paid off, so much so that even Walter was amazed at the agreement of text and tune, form and content in Luther's efforts. The rhymes are good, none are forced; there is no unnecessary or sentimental word. All breathes an air of freedom and confidence. The music at the "and was made man" in the Nicene Creed is to facilitate kneeling, a practice Luther is particularly keen to see retained.¹⁴

¹⁴"Sermons on the Gospel of St. John," LW22:105: "The following tale is told about a coarse and brutal lout. While the words 'And was made man' were being sung in church, he remained standing, neither genuflecting nor

In his musical and linguistic adaptations, we see Luther's genius at its best. Even here, however, continuity with the past is retained. Thirty-two of his thirty-six hymns are adaptations of pre-Reformation hymns. They are grounded in the church year, Luther having written hymns for every season except Lent (though many of his Easter hymns are rich with Lenten passion motifs).

In *Against the Heavenly Prophets* (1524), Luther develops his *via media* principles of liturgical reform. While opposing rigid uniformity, he wants at the same time to encourage a decent regard for tradition. Here he shows his freedom from a narrow rigidity, and why he is slow in producing a vernacular liturgy.¹⁵ It is not necessary to do everything as Christ did. Here he interprets the elevation as an affirmation of the Real Presence against its deniers. Luther states:

We, however, take the middle course and say: There is to be neither commanding or forbidding, neither to the right nor to the left. We are neither papistic nor Karlstadtian, but free and Christian regarding elevation. . . . In the parish church we still have the chasuble, alb, altar and elevate [the host] as long as it pleases us. . . . The pope and Dr. Karlstadt are true cousins in teaching, for they both teach, one the doing, the other the refraining. We, however, teach neither and do both!¹⁶

removing his hat. He showed no reverence, but just stood there like a clod. All the others dropped to their knees when the Nicene Creed was prayed and chanted devoutly. Then the devil stepped up to him and hit him so hard it made his head spin. He cursed him gruesomely and said: 'May hell consume you, you boorish ass! If God had become an angel like me and the congregation sang: "God was made an angel," I would bend not only my knees but my whole body to the ground! Yes, I would crawl ten ells down into the ground. And you vile human creature, you stand there like a stick or a stone. You hear that God did not become an angel but a man like you, and you just stand there like a stick of wood!' Whether this story is true or not, it is nevertheless in accordance with the faith (Rom 12:6)."

¹⁵"Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments," *LW*40:141.

¹⁶"Against the Heavenly Prophets," *LW*40:130.

On October 29, 1525, Luther's *Deutsche Messe* was celebrated for the first time. After the service, Luther said to the congregation: "the Mass is as you know the most important public office (*Hauptgottesdienst*) prescribed for the comfort of the Christian." Only in 1528 was it recommended for statewide usage, and then only for congregations where the majority no longer understood Latin. Luther specifically states in his introduction that it is not good for worship to be said only in the vernacular, but should be said in other languages to aid understanding others, to affirm ecumenicity and catholicity. He would even like to have it done in Greek and Hebrew, if only they had as many good tunes as Latin! Luther came out with this Mass, which could be called his "folk mass," to minimize the proliferation of rites.¹⁷ The Reformer argued that as far as is possible, each major region should use a common liturgy to minimize chaos and confusion. Such a practice could act as a stabilizing and unifying force. For the sake of the education of the young, Luther wanted his *Formula Missae* to continue being used, as it was in some regions until the early nineteenth century.

He suggests that lessons could be read by several persons, one chanting the Evangelist's words, and another Christ's, and other speakers by another. After the Gospel, the congregation shall sing the versified setting of the Creed: "We all believe in One True God." Unless the preacher is competent, Luther advises using pre-written homilies. Then follows a lengthy and somewhat clumsy paraphrase of the Our Father, and a eucharistic admonition and exhortation. Luther prefers celebration facing the people, and for the host and the cup to be distributed immediately after their consecration. He retains the elevation because it goes well with the German Sanctus, a version that tries to create a sense of mystery and awe. The elevation both reminds us that Christ daily offers His blood before God to obtain grace for us and signifies that Christ has commanded us to remember Him. Luther is anxious that private confession be maintained, and states that services should be

¹⁷"The German Mass and Order of Service," *LW*53:61.

planned in the interest of the young and unlearned. Latin is to be used on Feasts until there are enough German hymns for these occasions. Luther calls for a common standard to assess and control the profusion of rites. He concludes that when an Order is abused, it becomes a disorder.

Scholarly assessment of Luther's *Deutsche Messe* is mixed. Lutheran liturgical scholars, however, generally characterize it as a less rich liturgy, which follows less closely to the ancient Order of the Eucharist than his 1523 Mass did.

Broadly speaking, those Lutheran liturgies modeled on the *Formula Missae* are richer in form and content than those that take the German Mass as their model. The German Mass is a simplification of the liturgy for uneducated laity. It seeks to retain as much of the historic order for those villages that lacked a capable choir. Luther was disappointed that certain German states legislated the *Deutsche Messe* as the only main service for their areas. He believed, and history has shown him right, that this would lead to a great liturgical impoverishment. Brilioth argues that the restoration of the congregation's role in worship, the high place given to vernacular hymns, and Luther's view of the Lord's Supper as fellowship are worth more than all his liturgical criticisms.¹⁸ Luther's problem was that the Augustinian model on which he based his German Mass was by no means the best of models.

The Lutheran liturgical orders of Germany and Sweden were the first complete vernacular ones in Europe—ten years before any similar developments in England. The liturgical scholars Gasquet and Bishop call the first English Prayer Book of 1549 a "Lutheran" liturgy.¹⁹ This Book of Common Prayer is based on the Cologne version of Luther's liturgy. It uses fourteen of the petitions in the Litany, and is very similar to Cologne's Matins

¹⁸Yngve Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*, translated by A. C. Hebert (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 97.

¹⁹F.A. Gasquet and F. Bishop, *Edward VI and the Book of Common Prayer* (Hodges, 1890), 224. For the original text see *The First Book of Common Prayer of Edward VI. And the Ordinal of 1549 together with the Order of the Communion, 1548* (London: Rivingstons, 1869).

and Vespers. Its prescription of a whole Psalm instead of the short Introit follows Luther's suggestion. Other borrowings include expressions in the Confession, the prayer for the whole state of the church, the "Comfortable Words," and the second half of the Benediction. The Words of Institution are based on a German harmony.

The baptismal and burial orders show Lutheran influence. The relationship between Germany and England became reciprocal when Lutherans in North America used the Book of Common Prayer in wording their English liturgies. Generally though, Lutheran liturgies retained more of the ancient liturgical propers than did English ones. In Lutheranism, even non-eucharistic services were mostly ante-Communions, and so Lutherans always received more of the eucharistic propers than Anglicans did. By retaining the Introit and Gradual, Lutheranism provided more liturgical material for choral composition. Anglican worship developed more of a sacrificial worship than Lutheranism did. The irony, though, is that Lutheranism, which emphasized *faith* and *doctrine*, produced church orders, while Anglicanism, which emphasized *order*, produced a Book of Prayer (though the Lutheran liturgical orders were of course administered with considerable freedom). Perhaps the Swedish history parallels the English more closely.

The Scandinavian liturgies offer us another picture of Lutheran liturgical practice. While Germany has been taken as the norm and standard for Lutheranism, generally speaking, many Lutheran scholars believe that Lutheran worship is better represented in the Scandinavian lands.

At the time of the Reformation, Olavus Petri, a Deacon, was studying in Wittenberg. In 1518 he returned to Sweden to disseminate the ideas of the Reformation. Denmark ruled Sweden at the time, with papal support. Sweden revolted against Denmark in 1520, and the new Swedish king asked the pope to reform his church. Not satisfied with the result, he appointed Petri as reformer. Olavus's brother, Laurentius, who also studied at Wittenberg, was consecrated first Lutheran Archbishop of Sweden in 1531. He assisted a gradual and

constructive reform during his forty-two-year rule. In 1526, he published a Swedish New Testament and hymn book, and, in 1529, the *Manual of Things of Use for Swedish Priests*, containing the Occasional and Minor Offices.²⁰ The Swedish King insisted on a thorough educational program before any major liturgical changes were made official.

Olavus Petri's 1531 rite is a spoken Mass, since it is meant to replace the Low Mass; the High Mass still being sung in Latin.²¹ Here the priest's confession is transformed into a congregational confession. Otherwise it follows the historic order with the Nicene Creed as an alternative to the Apostles' Creed. This liturgy, too, omits the Roman Offertory and Canon, and has the *Sursum Corda* followed by a strongly penitential *Vere Dignum* based on a Latin Paschal Preface.²² This is, in effect, Petri's Eucharistic Prayer. Petri was less upset by the Mass Canon than Luther. As a patristics student, he knew of the existence of other eucharistic Canons than the Roman one. He has the Sanctus after the Words of Institution to stress that Christ's presence is effected by the consecration and reception as an indivisible whole. After the Peace, the priest speaks a brief word encouraging people to commune. Prior to the final Benediction, appear the words: "Bow your *hearts* to God and receive the blessing." The service closes with the Triune Invocation. Latin High Masses survived longer and more widely than even in Germany. Petri's rite was so successful, and suffered less revision than did its German counterparts, and was to become the Lutheran rite with the longest unbroken usage without having to suffer Pietist and Rationalist revisions.

Archbishop Laurentius Petri assisted his brother Olavus in all the various stages of liturgical reform, especially for the other offices. As in the East, his baptismal rite was virtually a rite of

²⁰Olavus Petri, *The Manual of Olavus Petri, 1529* translated by Eric E. Yelverton (London: SPCK for the Church Historical Society, 1953).

²¹Eric Yelverton, *The Mass in Sweden: Its Development from the Latin Rite from 1531-1917* (London: Harrison, 1920); Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 403-413; Reed, *Lutheran Liturgy*, 112-115.

²²Reed, *Lutheran Liturgy*, 115.

confirmation, accompanied as it was by the laying on of hands. Laurentius restored more of the ancient liturgical elements than his brother did. His crowning work was his 1571 Church Order.²³ The use of Latin was still retained. A hymn was permitted in place of the Introit, Latin graduals could be used on Festival Days, and the Tract during Lent; a Swedish confession and absolution came after the sermon, followed by intercessions and a litany, before the Preface. Elevation, eucharistic vestments, sanctuary lights, and genuflection were retained. This was a superb attempt to combine old and new. The order of development is the reverse to Luther's; Laurentius Petri's 1571 order more closely parallels the approach of Luther's 1523 *Formula Missae* than does Luther's 1526 German Mass.

Less successful, though, was King John III's *Red Book* (1576), with its thorough return to Catholicism.²⁴ He feared the power and beauty of the eucharistic worship was being weakened by Calvinism, and so he used his patristic knowledge to stem the threat. The priest's preparation and vesting prayers are re-introduced. The Offertory chant is restored and sung while the elements are brought forward. Then follows the *Te Igitur* and *Lavabo*. A modified form of the opening of the Roman Canon is included, as is some of the liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. The priest's communion follows the people's, a peculiar feature of the Swedish rite. The Swedish Synod rejected the book, more because of the way the king tried to enforce it, than because of anything that was unLutheran. The people, who were by now used to the robust sound of Luther's liturgy, were likely alienated more by the silent intercessions in the Canon than anything else. Yelverton sees this as an attempt to return to the better things of the pre-Reformation period, which is without parallel in English liturgical history.²⁵ More than anything else,

²³Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, 413-418; Reed, *Lutheran Liturgy*, 115-116.

²⁴Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, 421-441; Reed, *Lutheran Liturgy*, 116-119. The formal title of the liturgy was *Liturgia Svecanae Ecclesiae Catholicae et Orthodoxae conformis*. It was called the "Red Book" because of color of the binding of the earliest copies.

²⁵Eric E. Yelverton, *The Mass in Sweden* (London: Harrison, 1920), 73.

though, this attempt simply showed how thoroughly successful the Reformation in Sweden had been, a fact further attested to by the rejection of a Calvinizing campaign on the part of John's successor. Swedish history after this demonstrates a general dissatisfaction with non-eucharistic services. The result was a continuing incorporation of eucharistic components into them, until they virtually became ante-Holy Communion services.

Since Norway was part of Denmark until 1814, its liturgical history is similar to Denmark's. Denmark almost resisted Luther's Reformation. Hans Tausen ("the Danish Luther"), however, roused much popular support. In a series of debates, Tausen articulated Reformation themes, while Rome's defenders lost support among the common people when they refused to rebut Tausen in Danish. Finally, the King called for help from Luther to reform his country, and in 1537 Luther's co-reformer Bugenhagen went to Denmark. That year, he crowned Christian III in a ceremony that was an adaption of a Roman coronation, and consecrated the bishops of Denmark and Norway. The rite of that same year was in Latin, though only two years later it was translated into the vernacular.²⁶ Bugenhagen called for a thorough education program before changes were brought in. The rite is a mixture of Luther's 1523 and 1526 rites, with the following notable exceptions: elevation is accompanied by bells; candles on the altar are to be lit only when there is Communion; the service is celebrated in an alb until after the Sermon, when the chasuble is put on; the order prescribes kneeling and silent prayer at the beginning; the wording of the Confession is strong: "I have outraged you by my thoughts, words and deeds, and I confess the evil desire in my heart"; after the gospel, the response is: "God be praised for his glad tidings"; after the pulpit notices, the priest blesses the people; the response to the intercessions is: "Glory be to thee, forever."

This agenda issues instructions for celebrating each High Festival. There is great concern that the service be not too long—a bishop's consecration is to be over by 10:00 A.M. Laity

²⁶Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, 394-399.

are occasionally permitted to preach, provided they do not speak too long. The chasuble is invariably red, and the Lutheran "ruff" collar replaces the amice. The Danish and Norwegian readings and collects are closer to the English than German ones. Their liturgical differences from Rome are due less to the alteration of an ancient prescription than to the prohibitions of local pre-Reformation variations by the Council of Trent. The Vespers is closer to the traditional Latin than is the Book of Common Prayer's *Order for Evening Prayer*. "Psalm" here means a vernacular hymn. It is even specified what the priest is to preach on at the different times of the church year (for example, on St. John the Baptist's Day, preaching is to be against re-Baptism).

The *1539 Altar Book* of Denmark mainly contains the historic collects and lessons in large print. Children of married couples are to be baptized before the sermon, while illegitimate children are to be baptized after the sermon. The introduction to the 1685 Revision was considered such a good defense of traditional ceremonies, that it was translated into English. The regular service is to be a High Mass with nothing omitted. The sermon is after the Lord's Supper, and the gospel and prayers can be read either from the pulpit or altar. The liturgist (deacon) stands in the middle of the congregation to lead the singing better. School towns are to have the Nicene Creed in Latin. As long as another clergyman is present, the officiating priest is not to commune himself. Here for the first time, against Calvinistic influence, we have the polemical distribution formula "This is Jesus' *true* body." A medieval expansion of the Agnus Dei is used. The first communicants are already kneeling at the altar during much of the eucharistic liturgy, and before they commune, the priest prays a very beautiful prayer stressing the presence of the risen Lord.

In 1814, Norway united with Sweden, but it was not until 1889 that it developed its own rite. Generally, the Scandinavian rites, like the Anglican, have less detailed rubrics than the German rites have. The German rubrics contain an informative theology worthy of analysis.

We now take the 1528 Brunswick as a typical example of a German rite not created by Luther.²⁷ It is a useful one because we can compare it with its influential 1615 revision, and see how much the Lutheran liturgy had stabilized. This is a wholly vernacular rite, except for the choir parts, which are in Latin. This rite gives instructions regarding what is to be taught in schools, organists' duties, and welfare for the needy. Bugenhagen, who prepared this rite, takes a much stricter line on liturgical non-deviation than Luther did: "this is an order, and is to be followed as closely as the old order was!" The order presupposes a continued use of the old lectionary, prayer, and choir books, and may justifiably be characterized as providing "evangelical" instructions for the Roman rite—hence its brevity. A full Psalm replaces the Introit. The normal order is followed with the traditional sequences being sung on festival days after the epistle, the choir and people alternating in Latin and German. During the Nicene Creed, the congregation and priest sing alternately. The sermon is on the gospel, and, after the intercessions, the communicants enter the chancel. Then follow the Preface, Proper Preface, and Sanctus in Latin, as well as the Our Father in German (which is virtually a eucharistic, consecratory prayer). If there are no communicants, the priest still wears the vestments and the service concludes with the Lord's Prayer.

In 1615 the rite is still called a Mass. If the Introit is too difficult to sing, a hymn in German may be substituted. Decius's "All Glory Be to God" replaces the Gloria. The Gradual is a vernacular hymn, and "We All Believe in One True God" is exchanged for the Creed. The catechism is read at the beginning of the sermon, followed by a second reading of the gospel, which is then explained. Non-communicants are then encouraged to stay for the whole service. The rest of the eucharistic liturgy is the same as 1528. The sermon should encourage people to commune often. Eucharistic vestments are retained, as are sacramental candles.

²⁷Reed, *Lutheran Liturgy*, 91-97; Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, 330.

Generally, Lutheran liturgies of the seventeenth century exhibited a strong catholic sense and retained the form of the Mass. The exception to this rule is that where there were no communicants, the sermon replaced the eucharistic Canon. Until 1723, the main worship service in Lutheran lands involved the Sacrament of the Altar. On festival days, the nine-fold Kyrie returned and the lessons were chanted. The Gradual became the chief hymn, the theme hymn of the day, and the gospel was read from the pulpit. The difference between Reformed and Lutheran worship appeared particularly in differing music. The Lutherans, retaining Gregorian chants, used the organ alternatively with congregational singing, rather than accompanying it. The Pfalz-Neuburg (1543) liturgy is of unique importance, because it was one of the few to retain a eucharistic prayer:

O Lord Jesus Christ, thou only true Son of the living God, who hast given thy body unto bitter death for us all, and hast shed thy blood for the forgiveness of our sins, and hast bidden all thy disciples to eat that same body and drink thy blood to remember thy death; we bring before thy divine majesty these thy gifts of bread and wine, and beseech thee to hallow and bless the same by thy divine grace, goodness and power, and ordain (*schaffen*) that they may become (*sei*) thy body and blood, even to eternal life to all who eat and drink . . .²⁸

This would become the basis for 19th century eucharistic prayers in Bavaria and America.

Friedrich Kalb has thoroughly detailed how faithfully seventeenth-century Lutheranism adhered to Luther's liturgical principles and suggestions.²⁹ Kalb shows how unjust and incorrect is the charge of "dead orthodoxy" against 17th century Lutheranism. Orthodox Lutheran worship exhibited a rich vitality in that era. Yet, Pietism gradually and slowly undermined traditional liturgical practices.

²⁸Reed, *Lutheran Liturgy*, 635.

²⁹Friedrich Kalb, *Theology of Worship in 17th-Century Lutheranism*, translated by H. P. Hamann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965).

In the eighteenth century, German worship suffered badly from Pietistic and Enlightenment influences. The outstanding exception was Bach's Leipzig (1730-50). Gunther Stiller has shown how Bach was responsible for a liturgical revival in that city.³⁰ There was such an increase in communions that midweek eucharistic services had to be held. Private confession experienced an upsurge. Many of Bach's cantatas, which became a regular part of the liturgy, are filled with eucharistic allusions. These cantatas are fully intelligible only when their texts are viewed in relation to the Lutheran liturgy they served. The Lutheran liturgy was the native soil from which Bach's cantatas arose. They closely follow the Lutheran order of worship and the seasons of the church year. Bach saw the cantata as an important correlative of the sermon in the proclamation of the Gospel. Luther's "Theology of the Cross" finds rich expression in Bach's music, especially in his *Saint Matthew Passion*. His cantatas reveal a deep and prayerful exegesis of the epistle and gospel for that Sunday of the church year. Bach never envisaged that one day his cantatas would be "performed" outside of the Sunday liturgy. Rather than being composed for the pleasurable titillation of the ear, they were created for the heart and mind that they might give rightful glory to God. In the final analysis, Bach gives musical expression to what he found in Luther: true theology is doxology. At the age of twenty-three Bach had set himself the task of renewing Lutheran liturgical music. By 1748, he had exceeded all expectations. He had fulfilled his professed lifelong goal: "to provide well-regulated church music to the glory of God." His church music shows why Bach has rightly been called the greatest Lutheran theologian and liturgiologist since Luther!

Hermann Sasse often claimed that it was the Lutheran liturgy that saved the Faith of the Lutheran Church during the Age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century.³¹ The deep love

³⁰Gunther Stiller, *Johann Sebastian Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984).

³¹One may see, for example, Hermann Sasse, *Here We Stand: The Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith*, translated, with revisions and additions from the second German edition by Theodore G. Tappert (Minneapolis:

German Lutherans had for their liturgy can be seen in the widespread opposition to King Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia's imposition of an unlutheran liturgy on Lutheran congregations in September 1817. The "Awakening" initiated by Claus Harms in October 1817 and the 300th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession helped many Lutherans rediscover the priceless treasures they possess in their historic liturgies.

Lutheran liturgical work in the nineteenth century was more restorative than innovative. Bavaria, which had always fostered a high sacramentalism, was influenced especially by the great Neuendettelsau pastor, Wilhelm Löhe. Under him it became a leading center of liturgical and sacramental renewal. Nineteenth-century scholars returned to the best liturgies of the sixteenth century, and set about removing later questionable additions and changes.³² Löhe was perhaps typical of the high eucharistic piety of many of these scholars: "I find all of Lutheranism hidden away in the Sacrament of the Altar. Here all the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, and particularly those of the Reformation, have their center and focal point. It is not so much Lutheran doctrine, but sacramental living that counts with me. My progress is my advancing in a sacramental Lutheranism."³³ Lutherans in America, Germany and Australia who treasure the liturgical heritage of their church are forever indebted to Pastor Löhe and his renewal of authentic Lutheran worship.

In the period from Martin Luther to Wilhelm Löhe, in the German and Scandinavian Lutheran churches, we find amid the variety of liturgies, an overwhelming agreement on essentials.³⁴ The liturgies of this period are informed by a similar theology of worship and a common understanding of the purpose of

Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), 106, 109-110.

³²Reed, *Lutheran Liturgy*, 753.

³³F. W. Kantzenbach, "German Lutheran Theology of the 19th and 20th Centuries," in *The Lutheran Encyclopedia*, edited by Julius Bodensieck, three volumes (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1965), 2:912.

³⁴Theodor F. D. Kliefoth, *Die ursprüngliche Gottesdienst-Ordnung in der deutschen Kirchen lutherischen Bekenntnisses, ihre Destruction und Reformation*, five volumes (Schwerin: Stiller, 1859-1861).

Divine Service: God's building up of His people, and the people glorifying their God. There is a desire to worship God in continuity with Christians of past centuries. Despite the ardent attacks of Pietism and the Enlightenment, many Lutherans clung to the forms of worship they had inherited from Martin Luther. For them worship was "the Gospel in action." The sacramental parts of the liturgy gave expression to this. The Lutheran liturgies from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries show us how to maintain a healthy balance between the sacramental and sacrificial aspects of our worship. A better knowledge of them and the theology that shaped them can only enrich our present praise and adoration of the triune God.

Theological Observer

A Chapel Sermon on Matthew 8:24 Reformation 1997

I have shied away from watching to conclusion the several television and movie depictions of the sinking of the Titanic, because of the reality of its tragic ending. Tragedy in fiction is easier to take. After it is over, you can say to yourself that it never really happened. So confident were the owners of the ship's invincibility that it lacked enough life boats. What was declared unsinkable sank. As it sank, its sinking gave birth to more tragedies. Keeping the ship headed directly into the iceberg without turning the wheel would have inflicted less damage. A radio operator on a nearby ship had turned in for the night and the bleating SOS went unheard. On top of it all, men in evening dress, the upper crust of that day, stood on the deck singing "Nearer My God to Thee," and gallantly refused to take their places in the life boats only half filled with women and children. If success breeds further success, catastrophe multiplies with a cancerous zeal. The dying colossus steamed down into the cold depths of the Atlantic, there entombed as a perpetual memorial to the heady, empty human optimism.

If parable and history can be found in the same account, as Saint Paul does with the Old Testament, then our concern is not with nautical safety but with our Lutheran Church. Helmut Thielicke, a German theologian who understood himself as a confessional Lutheran with a clearly discernible streak of neo-orthodoxy, described the Lutheran Church as a ship on whose deck solemn Mass was being celebrated, while the clergy were blissfully ignorant that the ship was listing and waves were lapping on to the sides of the deck.

Traditionally Lutherans have commemorated the Reformation as victorious celebration, singing "A Mighty Fortress" and storming Rome's citadels with a zeal that would make the followers of Mohammed envious. At least that's how it looked in childhood. A less heroic picture of what really happens at Reformation celebrations is painted by that lonely warrior of Christ and twentieth century defender of the Lutheran Confessions, Hermann Sasse. His *Union and Confession*, written sixty years ago, has been distributed in English

translation by the synod president. Exiled from the once great Lutheran theological faculty of Erlangen, he found his way to Australia. In spite of a recommendation from the President of the Missouri Synod, John Behnken, the doors of the St. Louis faculty were shut against him. He saw the last remnants of the German Lutheran Church swallowed up in the 1930s. In these events he saw a replay of the great 1817 celebration of the Reformation in Prussia. History again proves itself to be parable.

Shortly after the Book of Concord was adopted for Brandenburg, the imperial elector prince converted to Calvinism and for two centuries his successors worked to bring the 7,000 Lutheran congregations under their care into the Reformed fold. What better time to bring this treachery to a climax than the 300th anniversary of Reformation. And what better place than the Cathedral Church in Berlin. What a magnificent day. The court chaplain preached that Luther and Calvin could receive no higher honor than merging Lutherans and Reformed into one Protestant Evangelical Church. And the *coup de grace*, that quick damaging blow to the head, was administered by introducing a liturgy which shied away from that embarrassing identification of the bread and wine with Christ's body and blood. With a piety befitting one who had made the Lutheran Confessions irrelevant and meaningless, the king with the crown prince and the entire royal family approached the altar to receive a food which was no longer sacred or sacrament. The day ended with the king-electors making his way down to Wittenberg among cheering crowds to unveil the statue of Luther holding a Bible. It still stands in the square. But Luther was gone. His doctrines about Christ and the Sacrament, which had sustained him against Pope and Protestant, had been compromised. Luther's great faculty had long since disappeared by merger into the faculty of Halle, that Jerusalem of Pietism, which swallows up Christian truth by legalisms masquerading as love. Church anniversaries that are multiples of one hundred and one thousand can be occasions for mischievous fanaticism. At the dawning of the third millennium, the pope like a loving

father waits for us and the Reformed still entice us to their altars which are no altars at all.

A Reformation anniversary that coincides with the 150th anniversary of our seminary and synod, as this one does, may be less of a time for celebration than it is a time of self-examination on the basis of the teachings of Luther and our Confessions. If we are reluctant to do this, then let us divest ourselves of the name "Lutheran" and be done with it all. To be Lutheran means that we do not approach the altar with those who deny Christ, His Sacraments, and the Church's creeds. To be Lutheran means avoiding liturgies that are not recognizable as Lutheran.

What was done in 1817 in Prussia was done by imperial force. What was done in 1997 was done voluntarily and with the full and conscious knowledge of repudiating the Lutheran Confessions. Luther is not honored by erecting statues, but his Reformation is perpetuated by preaching Christ and putting Him in the center of everything we believe and do and to trust in Him alone. He alone is truth, salvation and our life.

We do not shun our obligatory ecumenical witness to Christendom. The Confessions acknowledge that the Church of Rome holds to ancient doctrines of Holy Trinity and Christ, but the doors of heaven are shut when the people are urged to find salvation in Masses and prayers for the dead. Christ—not the saints—is our mediator with God. What is given with one hand in Christ's atonement is taken back by the other when the people are taught to look to themselves for salvation. The Reformed offer an even worse alternative. God is here in his majestic and often cruel sovereignty, but the Jesus by whom atonement is made for our sins is not here in this place. He is not here in preaching and He is not present in His Sacrament. We could well say, "they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid Him." In the face of impending horrors, we confess that Crucified One is the final and perfect manifestation of the God who reveals Himself as Father and Son and Holy Ghost.

The 150 years of our seminary and synod are remarkable achievements. Even if God should bring a just and wise judgment against us, as He has the churches in Europe and our continent, ours has been a history of grace undeserved by us or by our fathers. Our Reformation commemoration in 1997 is still a time of celebration not because we have conquered, but because God has left us on the field of battle. We are bloodied survivors, wounded in battle, but called to follow in the footsteps of warriors more noble than we can ever be. Reformation is a time of penance and remorse. "Spare thy people, O LORD, and do not make thy people a reproach, a byword among the heathen." Reformation is a time for walking around Zion's walls and rebuilding them. "Do good to Zion; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem." "Consider her ramparts and go through her citadels" "and we will declare thy great deeds to a generation not yet born."

It is difficult for me to watch depictions of the sinking of the Titanic. There was another ship destined to sink in the depths of the sea, but you know it didn't.

And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but [Jesus] was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, "Save, Lord; we are perishing." And [Jesus] said to them, "Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

David P. Scaer

The Triumph of "Schmuckerism"

"It is not a pleasant thing to exhume a decomposed corpse," John G. Morris is reported to have said.¹ He was reminiscing

¹Joseph A. Seiss, *Notes of My Life*, transcribed from eleven volumes of original manuscript in the archives of the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, by Henry E. Horn and William M. Horn (Huntingdon, Pennsylvania: Church Management Service, 1982). John G.

about the "Definite Synodical Platform" — the document written by Samuel Simon Schmucker, president of the Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg and published anonymously in 1855.² In this document Schmucker articulated a firm theological basis for the Lutheran General Synod that rejected what he believed were errors and omissions in the Augsburg Confession. Among the "errors" were baptismal regeneration, the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper, the retention of private confession, and the retention of pre-Reformation liturgical forms. What Schmucker believed the Augustana lacked was the "divine obligation of the Lord's Day," or what he elsewhere called observance of the Christian Sabbath.

Morris later reflected over the "corpse" of the Definite Platform because the reaction against it was strong, swift, and decisive. In fact, Schmucker had published the piece in a desperate effort to stem the rising tide of confessionalism, exemplified in the German community by the Missouri Synod, and among English speakers by the likes of Charles Porterfield Krauth, Joseph A. Seiss, William A. Passavant, and, ironically, Samuel Schumcker's son, Beale.³ So decisive was its rejection that only three synods of the General Synod adopted it, all of which were in the west and quite small numerically. The mother synod of the east, the Pennsylvania Ministerium, rejected it outright. And so, again years later, Seiss was able to write, "This was the final burial of the 'Definite Synodical Platform'. May it never have a resurrection in this or any other land! Its ghost still lingers in certain dark haunts, showing itself once in a while; but, like all ghosts, quite harmless and unsubstantial."⁴

Morris is perhaps best known for his delightful book of reminiscences about the Lutheran Church in the nineteenth century, *Fifty Years in the Lutheran Ministry* (Baltimore: Printed for the Author by James Young, 1878).

²*Definite Synodical Platform, Doctrinal and Disciplinary, for Evangelical Lutheran District Synods: Construed in Accordance with the Principles of the General Synod* (Philadelphia: Miller & Burlock, 1855).

³He would go on to become one of the chief liturgiologists of the Lutheran Church in the latter nineteenth century and played a determinative role in defining the principles that formed the Common Service.

⁴Seiss, *Notes*, 76.

The ghost of the Definite Synodical Platform has again risen to haunt Lutheranism. And this time it has proven itself to be quite harmful and substantial. I speak, of course, of the recent decision by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to enter into full communion with several churches of the Reformed Tradition. In *A Formula of Agreement* the ELCA claims to have reached "fundamental doctrinal consensus" with the Reformed on such previously problematic issues as baptismal regeneration and the real presence. Of note is the statement "in light of the radically changed world of the twentieth century, it was deemed inappropriate to defend or correct positions and choices taken in the sixteenth century, making them determinative for Lutheran-Reformed witness today."

Which brings us back to Schmucker. What was the ecumenical purpose of the Definite Platform? Schmucker's earlier works help give us a glimpse of his vision in this regard. When Schmucker was called to be the first professor and president of Gettysburg, he made quite an issue of "subscribing" to the Augsburg Confession. In this he was seen as somewhat radical, in that only the Tennessee Synod required any kind of subscription to any of the Lutheran symbols at this point in American Lutheran history. The character of Schmucker's subscription, though, is worth noting. He subscribed to the Augustana in so far as it articulated the fundamental doctrines of the Scripture in a manner substantially correct—which, of course, is tantamount to no subscription. In 1838 he published his *Fraternal Appeal to the American Churches*. In this volume he proposed a generic "Protestant" creed, comprised of the "fundamental" articles of faith, namely, those on which all Protestants agreed (there was no room for Roman Catholics in Schmucker's household of faith—and so his ELCA heirs depart from him on this point). How "Lutheran" was the result? Listen to the proposed Apostolic, Protestant Confession on the Sacraments: "The sacraments were instituted not only as marks of a Christian profession among men; but rather as signs and evidences of the divine disposition towards us, tendered for the purpose of exciting and confirming the faith of those who

use them. . . . Baptism is . . . a sign of the covenant of grace. . . . The supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves; but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death."⁵

The language of the *Formula of Agreement* shows the evidence of Schmucker's influence. Yet, what is so distressing about the present state of the ELCA is its failure to consider the theological ramifications of its move to full fellowship. In the middle nineteenth century, English-speaking Lutherans were rediscovering the riches of Confessional Lutheranism. They were delving deeply into the substance of the faith and finding there a christological and sacramental expression. They rediscovered their past, and learned their tradition and history. The result was one of the single most productive periods for Confessional Lutheranism in America. This was the period that saw the publication of the Henkel *Book of Concord*, Krauth's *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology*, the translation of Schmid's *Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Jacobs' masterful two volume edition of the *Book of Concord*, The Common Service, and Schmauk's *The Confessional Principle and the Confessions*, to name some of the more prominent works.

And yet today one is hard pressed to find a strong confessional spirit within the ELCA.⁶ What is so striking about Schmucker's work and the recent Reformed/ELCA *Agreement* is how closely they parallel one another. The *Agreement* makes little reference to the signatories' histories. Clearly "Schmuckerism" has triumphed. What is more tragic is that the ELCA seems blissfully unaware of it. And one is left to wonder if the corpse of confessionalism in the ELCA will rise again.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

⁵Samuel S. Schmucker, *Fraternal Appeal to the American Churches*, edited with an introduction by Frederick K. Wentz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 180-181.

⁶Some pockets do exist, though they are the exception to the rule.

Books Received

Baumler, Gary P. *John. The People's Bible*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997. V + 281 Pages. Paper. \$11.99.

Blomberg, Craig L. *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997. viii + 440 Pages. Cloth. \$24.99.

Campbell, Charles L. *Preaching Jesus: New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology*. Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1997. xlv + 289 Pages. Paper. \$28.00.

Edwards, Paul, editor. *Immortality*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1997. viii + 337 Pages. Paper. \$19.95.

Eno, Robert B., translator. *Fulgentius: Selected Works*. The Fathers of the Church, volume 95. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997. xviii + 583 Pages. Cloth. \$39.95.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Semitic Background of the New Testament*. Combined Edition of *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* and *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays*. The Biblical Resource Series. Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans; Livonia, Michigan: Dove Booksellers, 1997. xxi + 854 Pages. Paper. \$35.00.

Johnston, Paul I., editor. *Anthology of the Theological Writings of J. Michael Reu*. Texts and Studies in Religion, volume 71. Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997. v + 357 Pages. Cloth. \$99.95.

Keown, Gerald L., Scalise, Pamela J., and Smothers, Thomas C. *Jeremiah 26-52*. Word Biblical Commentary, volume 27. Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1995. xxix + 402 Pages. Cloth.

Koehler, J. P., Pieper, August, Schaller, John. *The Wauwatosa Theology*. 3 volumes. Curtis A. Jahn, compiling editor. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997. 1545 Pages. Cloth.

Letis, Theodore P. *The Ecclesiastical Text: Text Criticism, Biblical Authority and the Popular Mind*. Philadelphia/Edinburgh: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1997. xiii + 232 Pages. Paper.

Merding, J. E. *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine*. NewHaven/London: Yale University Press, 1997. xvi+207 Pages. Cloth. \$40.00.

O'Meara, Thomas Franklin. *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian*. Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997. xxi + 302 Pages. Paper. \$16.95.

Panning, Armin J. *Galatians, Ephesians*. The People's Bible. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997. v + 222 Pages. Paper. \$10.99.

Schjorring, Jens Holger, and others, editors. *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997. xxiv + 552 Pages. Cloth. \$39.00.

Vogt, John F. *Holy Spirit: The Giver of Life*. The People's Bible. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House. 1997. 153 Pages. Paper. \$8.99.

Book Reviews

JOHN WILLIAMSON NEVIN: AMERICAN THEOLOGIAN.
By Richard E. Wentz. New York and Oxford: Oxford
University Press. vii+ 163 pages. Cloth. \$35.00

"Although it is not easy for American intellectuals and scholars to admit it, the popular mind of America is still effectively shaped by the revivalistic Evangelical tradition of Christianity" (page 107). While Wentz is absolutely correct, the purpose of this study is to provide an in depth theological analysis of one nineteenth-century figure who strove over the course of his career to turn American theology and practice away from the influences of revivalistic Evangelicalism.

Nevin (1803-1886), a Presbyterian by birth, trained for the ministry at Princeton and taught at Western Theological Seminary (Pittsburgh) before becoming a member of the German Reformed Church. At the German Reformed seminary at Mecersburg, Pennsylvania, Nevin, along with his colleague Philip Schaff, articulated a theology completely at odds with the prevailing revivalism of the mid-nineteenth century.

How, then, can Wentz claim in the title that Nevin is an "American" theologian? Wentz states his thesis very clearly: "the life of John Williamson Nevin is shaped in response to the circumstances of American life and thought, that it represents an ever-expanding awareness that horizons are never settled boundaries, that the self is discerned as it is opened to symbols that transmit a reality ever greater than our ability to comprehend" (pages 12-13). In other words, Nevin demonstrated his Americanness precisely in his critique of America.

It was in the context of sectarian, denominational America that Nevin argued for a return to and appreciation for the catholicity of the church. In a series of eight chapters Wentz unveils the richness of Nevin's thought step by step. The first chapter is a brief biographical treatment of Nevin, followed by examinations of his views on systematic theology, the public character of theology, catholicity, theology of history, the place of America

in the theological task, missions, and liturgical theology. A brief conclusion, which recaps the theses of the various chapters, finishes out the work. The volume is unabashedly a work of historical theology. This is not a biography of Nevin, though Wentz does not neglect important aspects of Nevin's life. The point is simply that when events do show themselves in the work, they appear in order to explain the context in which Nevin argued a theological point.

What emerges from the text are the key theological points that define John Nevin: catholicity, history, the Incarnation, and liturgy. Each is symbiotically related to the others—they all hang together. For Nevin, catholicity means that the church is not an aggregation of individuals. Rather, it “represents the universal in our midst” (page 66). Thus, the church catholic is the church of history. Nevin will have nothing of the restorationist principle that seeks to reach back over the historical church to recreate a lost “golden age.” Instead, the church has been present historically from the time of Christ to the present. Thus, catholicity assumes the Incarnation. As Nevin would say it, “The whole fact of Christianity gathers itself up fundamentally into the single person of Christ” (page 135). Finally, a christocentric theology must express itself in particular liturgical forms. There is no dichotomy of theology and praxis, of substance and style. Again, quoting Nevin, “There is a most intimate connection between the use of such a [liturgical] scheme of worship and the practical apprehension of the great facts of Christianity in their proper form” (page 133). Or as Wentz puts it, for Nevin “Liturgy is an act of asceticism that brings together the life of nature and the life of heaven. The Incarnation makes this liturgical reality possible” (page 131). Finally, “the creed is apprehended in faith, for what it sets before us of the incarnate reality of the gospel” (page 136). In the end Wentz captures beautifully Nevin's thought: “we do not believe the Church because we are convinced of the superior qualities and attributes of the empirical institution. We contemplate the Church, respond to it in faith, because it proceeds from Christ”

(page 137). To put it briefly, liturgy is the absolutely necessary expression of theology because "it is a text of words and actions that communicate the reality of the Word made flesh" (page 139).

As powerfully as Wentz captures the essence of Nevin's thought, there are points at which the book could be improved. First, at times the prose is rather tortured and obscure, as the following example makes clear: "His 'conversion' experience abstracted the inner life from its ongoing sustenance in the nurturing life of the Church'" (page 14). Other examples abound. The overall effect is to make the book much more difficult to read than it need be. Nevin's concepts are demanding enough. The words and images that Wentz uses to communicate Nevin's thought to the modern reader do not always help clarify matters. In fact, at times they obfuscate the situation. The reader begins to wonder whether he is getting a fair and accurate overview of Nevin's thought, or if he is simply hearing Wentz. This is closely related to a second criticism. At times Wentz so clearly interjects his own opinions into the material as to compromise his points. For example, on page 47 he is overtly critical of Lutheranism. On page 117, after noting Nevin's appreciation for the German way of thinking, he editorializes, "One wonders what he would say of that mind and spirit from the perspective of one hundred years later." Finally, he brings in strange sources at times to help Nevin make his point (for example, Loren Eiseley's *The Star Thrower* on page 121).

That said, however, the book remains an extremely valuable contribution to Nevin scholarship. It is a tough read, indeed, but it is worth it. This is a book for the professor or dedicated graduate student. Wentz is too obtuse to make this volume accessible to any but the specialist. This is a real disappointment, for where Wentz's prose tends toward the philosophical, Nevin's has punch and directness. Even at his most obscure moments, Nevin maintains a clarity of presentation that is lost in Wentz. What would be helpful is for

Nevin's works to be more generally and easily available for the casual reader, so that the theological student of any level could approach Nevin directly. In the end it drives this reviewer to hope for a full edition of Nevin's works to be produced. After two abortive attempts (the Lancaster and Pittsburgh Series), the time is now for a full-fledged effort at making this important exponent of Reformed confessionalism available to the general theological enterprise.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

AT THE LIGHTING OF THE LAMPS: HYMNS OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH. By John A. McGuckin. Oxford: SLG Press, 1995; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing, 1997. xvi + 102 Pages. Paper.

One of my most treasured acquisitions from the shelves of used book stores is a 1858 publication entitled *Auswahl Aitchristlicher Lieder vom zweiten bisfunfzehnten Jahrhundert*, a selection of early Christian hymns from the second to the fifteenth century by a certain Ferdinand Baessler. In 256 pages this book offers 140 hymns, giving both Greek and Latin original texts and German translation. Although much more modest in size and selection, this little selection of early Christian hymns compiled by John McGuckin is most welcome, for it makes newly accessible to the English speaking texts of ancient devotion easily lost in the present-day lust for things new. It is not the first collection of early hymnody translated into the English. J. Brownlie's *Hymns of The Early Church* (1913) is a more thorough selection, and R. M. Pope published the hymns of Prudentius (1905). Nonetheless, this little book will be a cost-effective source of Christian prayer and devotion. McGuckin offers thirty-one hymns from the Eastern and Western patristic heritage, giving both the Greek and the Latin texts along with his own translation.

McGuckin admits that the choice of hymns is a "personal selection," but one which "represents the spirit of the ancient Church." I would concur, yet a certain quibbling about the

selection is justified. Given the limited number of hymns, that five come from the New Testament seems excessive. McGuckin is surely correct in reminding us that the New Testament and the Old Testament are full of hymns and hymnic material. His choice of New Testament hymns is a good one (John 1:1-18; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-20; 1 Timothy 3:16; Revelation 15:3-4), yet given the familiarity of these texts, their status as early Christian hymns could have been noted in the Introduction and their space given to lesser known patristic hymns. Secondly, the selection of Sedulius Scotus (ninth century) and of Pseudo-Synesios (tenth century), which extends beyond the patristic period seems, unjustified, again in view of the limited selection of the book. The result is that some hymn writers well within the patristic period are omitted, such as the fifth century Coelius Sedulius and Methodius. Finally, there is an evident predilection for the Byzantine tradition, with four hymns by John of Damascus chosen and a number of selections from the Byzantine liturgy. This "personal selection" may reflect the fact that McGuckin recently converted to Eastern Orthodoxy. Nonetheless, for a readership most likely Western, these hymns deserve to be known and appreciated.

Perhaps McGuckin is too optimistic, but noting that these hymns were written for open recitation, he invites the reader to read the hymns out loud. He assumes that the Latin pronunciation will be somewhat familiar. But for those who do not know Greek "it is only a few days' practice to acquire the phonetic skills that would allow oral declamation of the Eastern pieces" (page xiii). To assist in this, McGuckin gives a two-page "Pronunciation Guide to Byzantine Greek." That may be expecting too much from most readers. However, McGuckin assures us that in his translation he attempted to keep poetic license to a minimum and to render the original so as to give a "graceful and poetic English that tries to catch the spirit of the original, yet with a firm hand on textual authenticity" (page xii). He has succeeded to a remarkable degree.

William C. Weinrich

2 TIMOTHY: BE STRONG. By Irwin J. Habeck. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997. Cloth. 110 pages. \$19.99

What does the text say? How does it apply to us personally? How will it apply to our work in the pastoral ministry? Answers to these questions were the goal of the exegetical task for author Irwin J. Habeck. The outline of the book is strong in its simplicity. The theme is "Be Strong" (2 Timothy 2:1). Be strong personally (1:3-2:13) and be strong in your ministry (2:14-4:8) is St. Paul's message to his beloved Timothy.

Two marks distinguish Habeck's commentary. It is pastoral. It is practical. His pastoral heart shines through his exposition of the text of Scripture. He distinguishes between Law and Gospel, and he makes relevant application of the Word to the human soul. His practical applications are presented with a mind toward the shepherding of souls redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

This is a conservative Lutheran biblical commentary for pastors and lay persons. The literal translation of the text conveys the flavor and emphasis of the original Greek text. The exposition discusses the meaning of words and phrases. The text is examined in the light of its historical setting and the canon of Scripture as a whole. The interpretation expounds Law and Gospel, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Word, and the mission of the Church. These are elements of a good theological commentary!

Habeck wants the reader to come to a devotional study of the pastoral epistle that encourages men today to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1).

The Greek text is printed for the reader's analysis, followed by the author's own literal English translation. Each passage is given theological exposition toward the end of proper interpretation of the text and also a full discovery of meaning. The author is a good model of an exegete who is pastoral.

The commentary would be improved with a fuller exposition of biblical terms, for example, mercy and peace. The author presupposes former biblical studies.

The commentary is easy to read, and the author is not given to pompous scholarship or impractical circumlocutions. He has a high view of Scripture. This book is a good resource for a Bible class on 2 Timothy. I recommend Habeck's commentary for the pastor's library. It will help in preaching on 2 Timothy texts (Lutheran Worship: 20th, 21st, 22nd, and 23rd Sundays after Pentecost [Series C], St. Luke, 18 October [3 year series and 1 year series], and St. Mark, 25 April [3 year series]; The Lutheran Hymnal: 9th Sunday after Trinity [2nd series], Sexagesima [2nd series], and Dedication [2nd series]). Hymns based on 2 Timothy texts are 166, 123, and 354 in Lutheran Worship, and 209, 381, and 599 in The Lutheran Hymnal.

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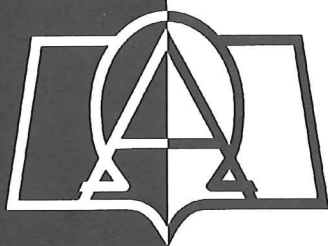
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