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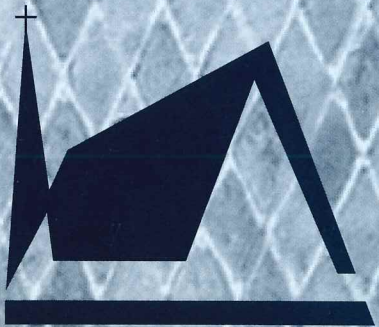

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

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Reformed Exegesis and Lutheran Sacraments: Worlds in Conflict

David P. Scaer

1. Theology and Biblical Studies

If a conflict does not exist between theology (dogmatics) and exegesis (the science or art of biblical interpretation), the potential for it is always there. Exegetical scholars can be critical of theologians for offering their views without adequate biblical supports or failing to exploit potentially superior citations. Theologians look first at exegetical conclusions and judge what is permissible within doctrinal or traditional boundaries. Luther's discovery of justification by faith, an exegetical finding, stood at odds with common church belief. By finding no New Testament reasons for prohibiting the ordination of women pastors, many biblical scholars have challenged traditional church practice limiting the pastoral office to men. Church theologians have responded with both dogmatic and biblical reasons against ordaining women. In the events that accompanied the disruption in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 1974, some members of the Department of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, determined the methods of certain exegetical scholars were wrong because their non-historical interpretation contradicted church doctrine. Today the exegetical issue for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has shifted. Neo-Evangelical scholars, who influence the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, affirm biblical historicity, but, with roots in Reformed theology, they are non-sacramental in their reading of biblical texts. Where a sacramental interpretation cannot be avoided, they allow only for a symbolical interpretation. Lutherans dependent on these scholars are unlikely to utilize the full sacramental treasures of the Scriptures.

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a. Theology

Theology finds its focus in what a church believes (*fides quae*). It takes the faith of one generation, delivers it to another, adjusts it to new situations, and, where necessary, defends it. Creeds and confessions are static, but theologies are contemporary. Theology is a critical discipline, marking off the boundaries of the true religion from false alternatives. Without this critical function, theology regresses into historicism. In preserving a church's faith, theology distinguishes that church's belief from that of other churches and so presents reasons for its own existence. Without the apostolic succession of its bishops, Anglicanism would loose its *raison d'être*, and so this article is the non-negotiable item in its rapprochement with Lutherans. Vatican theologians are cognizant that the Council of Trent's distinguishing characteristics may be compromised in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* and hesitate to conclude the treaty with Lutherans. If Luther's doctrine on justification is allowed, his continued excommunication and the last 400 years of Rome's history become less explicable. Large Lutheran churches have accommodated themselves with the Reformed, especially in allowing for a general presence of Christ in the Supper, but not specifically in the elements, and so undermine their own existence.

Theology also has an ecumenical task in preserving a catholicity that both transcends space and time and recognizes the expression of this catholicity in specific places and times. It is not, strictly speaking, a congregation's nor an individual's task to determine what is ultimately true. The "we believe's" of the Ecumenical Creeds and the Lutheran Confessions are the Synod's, congregations in communion with each other, accepting and preserving what was once delivered by the apostles to the saints. Church belief (*fides quae*) is an historical given and not a contemporary achievement of sovereign congregations individually or in a covenant arrangement. Paul delivers only those things that he has received to the churches. Neither he nor his churches are originators of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23), the prohibition against women pastors (1 Corinthians 14:34-37), and Christ's

resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3). These belong to the apostles' teachings and are the common possession of all the churches.

b. Biblical Studies

Scriptures for the exegete are fenceless prairies where he may roam, and so he is the envy of those whose goals are predetermined by tradition and official boundaries. Previously overlooked citations hold out a promise of discovery and provide a wider and deeper foundation for a church's theology. His field of exploration is the raw biblical data, a luxury not allowed the theologian, who has a concern for accepted church teaching, or the practical theologian (pastor), whose tasks are situationally determined and often unpredictable. A confessional fellowship requires a biblical scholar to know and evaluate traditional interpretations of the biblical evidences. Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Reformed traditions of biblical interpretation tend to be distinctive—or at least they should be. Even before the work of a particular scholar is examined, his conclusions are anticipated. A Baptist would hardly be expected to use the pericope of Jesus blessing the children as an indication that the baptism of infants was in vogue in the early church. Lutheran exegetes, whose church life centers in word and sacrament, can and should be open to discovering sacramental references everywhere. Regardless of bias or prior position, no serious Bible scholar claims to have exhausted the meaning of a particular pericope. Passages traditionally used to support a position may be found to have other vistas in sight. Hermeneutics is not a closed system. Dogmatically oriented groups may, for the sake of self-preservation and their own orthodoxy, limit permissible methods of interpretation. However, when the methods themselves are exempt from scrutiny and critique—that is, they possess an unchallengeable autonomous objectivity—they, in effect, replace the Scriptures as the final norm.

Confessional subscription does not require lockstep methods or precise, predetermined conclusions for each pericope. It does require that the exegete be aware of his own tradition and the bias of the scholars who influence him. Biblical scholars of

particular churches ideally are obligated to preserve their confessional positions. Left unchecked, they damage their traditions. After Vatican II, Roman Catholic schools of theology acquired instructors without regard to church allegiance. This generated the disasters now being reversed by the present pontiff. Lutherans, too, are not immune to external and often damaging influences.

c. Head to Head

The greater freedom with which biblical scholars ply their trade inherently carries with it a potential hazard to one's ecclesiastical health, as Luther discovered. He and the confessors made every effort to demonstrate that the doctrine of justification was not an exegetical novelty by citing the church fathers, but this proved unconvincing to their Roman adversaries—hence excommunication and Reformation. Luther's removal demonstrates a general rule that the body politic prefers the *status quo,* which its theologians, rather than its biblical scholars, are more likely to preserve. Court theologians tend to lack the virtue of self-analysis, and their pronouncements tend to be predictable.

Tradition guides biblical interpretation, but tradition may not be substituted for it or allowed to hinder it. *Sedes doctrinae* have value in showing how the church does its theology, but they may not become barriers to discovery in the other words of God. They do not have a stranglehold in demonstrating revealed truth, so that other passages are prevented from being used. Each word of God has an inherent value in and of itself. Designating a passage as *sedes doctrinae* is a *theolegoumenon,* that is, it is a theological, not a hermeutical, decision. Not unexpectedly, each church (confession) has its favored *sedes.*

A lack of clarity in a pericope is perceived and not intrinsic. Responsibility for not seeing the importance of a passage rests in the interpreter and certainly not in the text or the Holy Spirit. No one interpreter can be familiar with the *Sitz im Leben* of every citation. He may not have extricated himself from an inherently flawed or inadequate method or tradition.

Discarding a Scripture in theological formulation because of a perceived inadequacy may reveal more about the interpreter than the citation. Plenary inspiration holds out the possibility that every biblical citation has more than what any interpreter can discover. Simply because certain Old Testament messianic prophecies are hallowed by tradition does not preclude a much wider field of discovery. In fact, the entire First Testament is messianic in goal and purpose. The Small Catechism's use of the four accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper does not suggest that other words of Jesus cannot define the sacrament, as Luther himself showed. A similar principle applies to baptism. If the traditional *sedes doctrinae* from the Synoptic Gospels and the Pauline Epistles support a Lutheran sacramental theology, we have every liberty to look for sacramental references elsewhere in these Gospels and the Fourth Gospel. Oft-cited pericopes are not fences beyond which we dare not look, but guides.

2. Cross Pollination

a. Scholarship Across Boundaries

Because the divine word appears in human language, biblical scholars take advantage of secular sources and scholars outside their tradition. In the ancient church, Gnostic sources provided materials for the church, which proved itself to be catholic and orthodox. Qumran, Gnostic gospels, and rabbinic sources are no less significant than the Greek philosophy and mythology in which Lutheran pastors have been trained since the Reformation. Biblical studies cross established lines dividing one confession from another and from those without acceptable religious convictions. Rudolph Bultmann, John A. T. Robinson, Joseph Fitzmeyer, W. D. Davies, Dale Allison, Michael Goulder, and Raymond Brown prove themselves useful quite apart from church alliances or lack of them.

b. Reformed Consistency

Unlike Lutherans who are bound to one set of confessions, Reformed Protestantism is not tethered to one particular

document, and it is found in many denominations.[1] In encompassing groups with diverse practices and differing doctrinal details, Reformed Protestantism is as much a frame of reference as it is a church. Its Congregationalist form moved towards Unitarianism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A biblically committed form expressed itself in Fundamentalism and later in neo-Evangelicalism, whose exegetes have produced a remarkable and enviable harvest of biblical scholarship from whose droppings conservative Lutherans often glean. Lutherans may find themselves in alliances with neo-Evangelicals, who arguably are the most articulate preservers of the Reformed faith today. Even without being fully bound to confessions, neo-Evangelical scholars consistently bring their biblical scholarship in line with the Reformed principles of Zwingli and Calvin. While they insist on biblical inspiration, inerrancy, and historicity, their defining principle—that God's simplicity does not allow a full and personal involvement in His creation (*infinitum non capax finiti*)—is squarely at odds with Lutheran thought.[2] In Reformed thought, faith, and not the sacraments, is seen as necessary for salvation. This anti-sacramentalism is cloaked in an explicit anti-Roman Catholic polemic and surfaces in non-sacramental interpretations of biblical texts. Where references to baptism and the Lord's Supper cannot be avoided, they are presented according to Reformed definitions. Their scholars often reject

[1]Jan Rohls, *Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen*, translated by John Hoffmeyer (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 1. Lutherans often assume that the Reformed enjoy doctrinal unity. In surveying the traditional Reformed confessions, Rohls dispels this notion. The Reformed work from general philosophical and theological principles, which produce variant views.

[2]The Reformed doctrine of inerrancy must be viewed in connection with their doctrine that the law is God's last word to Christians, and so the Bible is appreciated for its correctness in providing rules for Christian living and not because the Spirit is actually tied to the words. See Rohls, *Confessions*, 177-181. In Lutheran theology the Scriptures are understood incarnationally and sacramentally. In them, Jesus Himself is present and calling believers to baptism and to the Lord's Supper.

Zwingli with the Anabaptists, but follow Calvin without identifying their position as his.[3]

Great neo-Evangelical theological schools like Trinity, Gordon-Conwell and Fuller; publishing houses like Moody, Baker, Zondervan and InterVarsity; and scholarly societies like the Evangelical Theological Society and the Institute for Biblical Research are stalwart defenders of biblical history, a matter of fundamental importance to the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. On the other hand, they are consistently Reformed in not allowing such Lutheran views as the ubiquity of Christ's human nature, baptismal regeneration, and an identification of the sacramental bread with Christ's body. What is characteristically Lutheran, as shaped by our confrontation with the Reformed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has no part in the neo-Evangelical agenda and is seen as alien or inimical. A common or neutral ground attempted by Lutherans and neo-Evangelicals is *de facto* a concession to the Reformed.

Neo-Evangelicals are recognized for their scholarship even by those who do not share their commitment to biblical inspiration and inerrancy (historicity). The downside is that neo-Evangelical exegetical methods embody intrinsically anti-Lutheran biases derived from Zwingli, Bullinger, and Calvin, whose theology involves a neo-Platonic Augustinianism, which does not allow a full participation of God in the incarnation and Jesus in the sacraments.[4] The Spirit's direct working obviates a saving necessity for sacraments. Neo-Evangelical exegetes consistently, though perhaps unknowingly, incorporate this philosophy into their biblical methods, which, predictably, results in a minimalist sacramental hermeneutic.

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[3]Though Zwingli's radical views were rejected, his neo-Platonic/Augustinian concept of God as the highest good and his sacramental dualism were retained in Reformed theology. Jan Rohls describes the Second Helvetic Confession (1561) as "the classic document of this modified Zwinglianism" (*Confessions*, 16).

[4]Rohls, *Confessions*, 16.

c. Reformed Theology as Rationalistic

Lutherans who admire the neo-Evangelical defense of the biblically supernatural may not recognize that they deny a full divine intervention in the sacraments. What appears to be a contradiction in Reformed theology really is not. The human Jesus no more performed miracles than he is really present in the sacraments. Classical Reformed theologians opposed the eighteenth century Enlightenment, but its Rationalism was a conclusion of Reformed thought. The highly developed Reformed doctrine of general revelation, which invites human beings to fear and love the true God, anticipated Rationalism, which disposed entirely of special revelation in favor of what could be known of God through nature.[5] Their doctrine of providence prepared the way for the Deistic belief of Rationalism that the Creator was no longer personally involved in the world.[6] Neo-Evangelicalism is faithful to classical Reformed theology and resists Rationalism's arguments against miracles, but all three movements spring from the same roots.

d. Lutherans in a Neo-Evangelical World

Lutherans may be drawn to neo-Evangelical scholars by a shared commitment to the *sola scriptura* principle, but rarely has this produced a commonly held theology. It may be that a shared commitment may be more apparent than real. Neo-Evangelical scholars are faithful to Calvin's heritage in avoiding sacramental biblical interpretations almost without exception. Lutheran interpreters, in the tradition of Luther and the great Lutheran dogmaticians like Johann Gerhard, should be expected to arrive at a full sacramental interpretation of the biblical texts. By drawing on neo-Evangelical scholars without being critically aware of those interpreters' Reformed heritage,

[5]Rohls, *Confessions,* 30-33. Reformed theology speaks of God's self-revelation as two books, one in nature and another in special revelation (*Confessions,* 31). Natural revelation in Reformed thought serves primarily, so it seems, as an adjunct to their doctrine of election in excusing God from not electing everyone.

[6]Rohls, *Confessions,* 58.

Lutherans are in danger of undoing the Reformation and losing their own heritage. This creates a tension between biblical interpretation with Reformed presuppositions and a Lutheran sacramental theology and church practice—hence this paper's title, "Reformed Exegesis and Lutheran Sacraments." This has consequences for preaching and pastoral practice. Where the biblical texts *a priori* are deprived, in the neo-Evangelical style, of their inherent sacramental potential, Lutheran dogmatics, preaching, and practice must resort for final refuge to the *sedes doctrinae*, which are precious few in comparison with the wide expanse of Scripture. Such an approach acknowledges that the Bible is only occasionally sacramental, with the biblical bulk given over to the Reformed hermeneutic of the neo-Evangelicals. Lutheran attempts at sacramental preaching are forced to become artificially dependent on traditional dogmatics and not on the biblical texts themselves. What cannot be found in the biblical texts is found in the Confessions and Luther. This leaves the neo-Evangelicals as the true defenders of the *sola scriptura* and gives them reason to see Lutheran commitment to their Confessions as an infringement on this principle.

e. Neo-Evangelicals Speaking for Themselves

In *The Dying of the Light*, James Burtschaell detailed how Christian colleges became detached from their religious foundations.[7] A much larger task is attempted but not completed in identifying Reformed biases in neo-Evangelical biblical scholarship. Such neo-Evangelical scholars as Donald Guthrie, Donald A. Carson, Leon Morris, and F. F. Bruce are widely known in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. They are admired by confessional Lutherans—among whom I happily include myself—for their defense of biblical history in the face of Bultmann's demythologizing. True to Reformed tradition, however, they keep sacramental references to a minimum or provide a Reformed interpretation. A case in point is

[7]James Tunstead Burtschaell, *The Dying of the Light* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998).

John 3:3-5, especially verse 5: "except a man be born of water and the word, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Lutherans use this citation to demonstrate baptism's regenerative qualities for adults and infants and its saving necessity, both of which have no place in neo-Evangelicalism. Morris, an Australian Anglican, deprives this pericope of any sacramental meaning with a clear anti-Lutheran bias. First he toys with removing the word "water" as a later textual interpolation. This would establish his case for an anti-sacramental reading, that is, Christians would be born of the Spirit and not the water, a fundamental Reformed tenet. Because he opposes the radical higher critics who tampered with the text to arrive at an earlier form, he takes the text as it is. This is not a harbinger of better things. Quite the contrary, he is determined to defuse the text of any reference to baptism and its regenerative qualities. He offers three possible interpretations for "water": 1. purification with repentance; 2. water as a sign of the Spirit's working; and 3. Christian baptism. Option one is rejected, because it would suggest that something happens to the individual in and because of baptism, a view unacceptable to the Reformed.[8] For support, Morris references another scholar to show that "'entrance into eternal life is not conditioned by a magical renewal of the physical nature to be obtained by prescribed rites, but by a birth *from above*, from God' (on v. 3)."[9] "Magical renewal of the physical nature" is anti-Lutheran code. Birth from above for Morris and all neo-Evangelicals is conversion connected with "personal faith" and not baptism. Morris also rejects the third option that Christian baptism is in view: "Nicodemus could not possibly have perceived an allusion to an as yet nonexistent sacrament," (a frequently used argument against a eucharistic interpretation of John 6).[10] By

[8]Rohls, *Confessions*, 217. For the Reformed, baptism does not really do anything, and hence there is no reason for an emergency baptism.

[9]Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 191. In response to Morris, let it be said that a birth from above does not preclude the renewal of man's physical nature through the spiritual nature. Resurrection from the dead is the ultimate renewal of the physical nature.

[10]Morris, *John*, 192-193.

rejecting John 3:3-5's reference to Christian baptism, Morris explicitly denigrates Luther's view that "'water ... becomes a very spiritual bath through the Holy Spirit or through the entire Trinity.'" To refute Luther, the biblically conservative Morris cites the radical J. D. G. Dunn: "'John seems to be challenging any sacramentalism on the part of his readers.'" With that Morris wipes away any possible sacramental reference in the whole of John's Gospel. Morris is not casually non-Lutheran, but deliberately and explicitly anti-Lutheran. In promoting his own interpretation of "water" as "spiritual water," that is, the Holy Spirit, he could have omitted any reference to Luther's baptismal interpretation or included it without refuting it. He fails to tell the reader that his own view, that "water" is the Spirit, is, in fact, Calvin's, knowledge of which he could not have been unaware.[11] Without our looking at his conclusions about John 6 (the discourse on the Bread from Heaven) and John 19 (the blood and the water flowing from Christ's side), we know that any sacramental inferences are effectively eliminated. An entire Gospel is taken out of sacramental discourse. Morris' biblical scholarship is nothing but traditional Reformed theology. F. F. Bruce, an equally honored scholar, has no use for the kind of arguments offered by Morris that baptism has no meaning for Nicodemus. He notes that, at the time of the Gospel's writing, John's baptism had ceased and been absorbed into Christian baptism, a defensible argument holding much promise for Lutheran theology. The good that Bruce accomplishes is immediately undone when he talks about baptism, according to a Reformed definition, as symbolizing a new spiritual life, thus appropriately distancing himself from "the notion of baptismal regeneration by an *opus operatum*," a censure intended for proponents of baptismal regeneration

[11]John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), IV:XVI. 25. "By 'water and the Spirit,' I simply understand the Spirit, which is water." One may see David P. Scaer, *Baptism*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, volume 11 (Saint Louis: The Luther Academy, 1999), 62. Rohls notes that the Lutheran doctrine of baptismal necessity is the same as Rome's (to which is attached the practice of emergency baptism), which is specifically rejected (*Confessions*, 216-217).

(Lutherans).[12] He consistently argues that Jesus, in John 6, "expound[s] the truth which the Lord's Supper conveys," by which Bruce means the rite is only a faith event.[13] Donald Guthrie, whose *New Testament Introduction* is in use in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, sees "water" as a reference to a physical birth and not baptism. John's baptism possesses no regenerative power.[14] He comes down on the same side as Calvin, Morris, and Bruce. Infusion of neo-Evangelical biblical scholarship into Lutheran veins contaminates them with the Reformed anti-sacramental virus.

3. Luther and Sacramental Exegesis

Luther's failure to find a eucharistic allusion in John 6, the discourse on the Bread from Heaven with its requirement that believers eat His flesh and drink His blood, may seemingly provide Lutherans with a minimalist sacramental hermeneutic. His approach would then fall in line with Reformed doctrine and contemporary neo-Evangelical biblical methods in limiting the biblical sacramental references. We do not attempt here to unearth the underlying causes for Luther's treatment of John 6, but we know that Zwingli used John 6, especially the words "the flesh profits nothing," to support his view that the Supper was nothing but a memorial meal. Luther took the battle to the *verba* in the institution narratives, concentrating on the word *est* in *hoc est corpus meum*. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that his interpretation of John 6 exhausts his biblical method in handling sacramental texts. Along with such Luther scholars as Martin Brecht and Jaroslav Pelikan, Ulrich Asendorf claims an authentic picture of Luther as a theologian and biblical scholar emerges in his *Genesis Lectures* (1535-1545),

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[12]F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994) 84-85. General Editors for The New International Commentary on the New Testament, in which Morris' *John* appeared, are in succession Ned B. Stonehouse (1946-1962), F. F. Bruce (1962-1990) and Gordon D. Fee (1990 -).

[13]Bruce, *John*, 161.

[14]Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 728.

where he is, to put it mildly, sacramentally promiscuous.[15] At the time of the *Genesis Lectures,* the Reformation's formative years had passed, and the fanatics, with their anti-sacramental attitudes, had replaced the pope as the church's chief enemy. Arthur A. Just calls attention to Luther's sacramental reading of Genesis, an idea that Naomichi Masaki elaborates on in his Master of Sacred Theology thesis subtitled, "Sacramental Instruction of Dr. Martin Luther According to his Lectures on Genesis 1535-1545."[16] Just as God is only known through His Son and the Spirit, so the Triune God comes to man through coverings, which, for Luther, are sacraments, means of grace.[17] Among these Luther includes the gentle breeze to Adam, the mercy seat of the tabernacle, the cloud, and the pillar of fire in the desert. Just as God is present in the New Testament sacraments, He was present in these coverings in the Old Testament, which are no less sacraments than the New Testament rites. Luther's Old Testament sacramentology does not indicate that in his declining years he returned to an earlier medieval Catholicism. Rather it emerges from his belief that God is married to His creation, a view that sets him off from the Reformed, who cannot get beyond the philosophical barrier that a real and full participation of the infinite God in the finite creation is impossible. Now compare Luther for whom the

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[15]Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church 1531-1546,* translated by James Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 36; Jaroslav Pelikan, "Introduction to Volume 1," in *Luther's Works, Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5,* edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, volume 1 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), xii; Ulrich Asendorf, "Luther's Genesisvorlesung als Paradigma christlicher Weltverantwortung," *Christentum und Weltverantwortung* (Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1992), 71-94. Robert Kolb notes ("Sixteenth-Century Lutheran Commentary on Genesis and the Genesis Commentary of Martin Luther," *Etudes de Philogie et d'Histoire* 43, edited by Irena Backus and Francis Higman, [Geneva: Librarie Droz S.A., 1990], 243-58) that later Lutherans did not follow Luther. Further references to the Genesis volume will be abbreviated *LW* 1.

[16]Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:-9:50,* Concordia Commentary Series (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1996), 18; Naomichi Masaki, "Genesis as Catechesis," Master of Sacred Theology Thesis, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1997.

[17]*LW* 1:11.

touching of Jesus' garment by the woman is sacramental. For him, God is continuously sacramental from His creation to the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and, finally, to the Lord's Supper. The divine creative word comes to conclusion in the redemptive and sanctifying sacramental word. In His redemption God continues as the creator. Luther draws a line from the water in creation through the water of the Red Sea to the water in baptism. In all these acts God kills and makes alive.[18] God is working through coverings, that is, sacraments, to come to His people. All Old or New Testament rites are qualitatively the same kinds of divine actions in that God is working in and through them.[19] In the light of his *Genesis Lectures* (1535-1545), Luther's interpretation of John 6 can no longer be read as evidence for an anti-sacramental hermeneutic. Quite to the contrary! Luther may have excluded John 6 with the feeding of the 5000 from the sacramental debate, but he understands the same incident in Matthew 14 sacramentally.[20] The bread is a covering, a means of grace, under which God is working.

4. Rome and Geneva: Strange Bedfellows

Excessive sacramental interpretations of biblical texts are often labeled as Roman Catholic. It is also the appropriate Protestant thing to say about Lutherans who are thought to have one toe in the Tiber. We do not want to belabor the point that according to their own definition, the Reformed do not have sacraments. That something happens in a Reformed baptism is a Lutheran and not a Reformed claim. For the Reformed these rites are means of grace only in a noetic sense—to inform us that God gives grace—but not in the rites themselves.[21] A prior, symbolical interpretation of the Old Testament rituals of circumcision and Passover supports their understandings of baptism and the Lord's Supper as symbolical rites without

[18]*LW* 1:35.
[19]Masaki, "Genesis," 19.
[20]*LW* 1:33.
[21]Rohls, *Confessions*, 185-186.

inherent content. They take consistent approaches to both Old and New Testaments.[22]

Strange as it might seem, Roman Catholicism, with its highly developed sacramental theology, agrees with the Reformed in denying that God's Old Testament people had real sacraments. Rome made this her official position at the Council of Florence (1439) and confirmed it in the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Against both the Reformed and Roman Catholicism, the great Lutheran dogmatician Johann Gerhard insisted that the Old Testament sacraments were effective means of grace. Robert Bellarmine, Rome's champion, asserted that grace was only given in the New Testament rites.[23] Old Testament rites, rituals, sacrifices, historical events, and celebrations of historical events were only symbolical. If the Reformed took offense at Rome's extra sacraments, they found an ally in holding that God did not provide Old Testament saints with sacraments—strange bedfellows, but on Calvin's terms.

Luther's sacramental reading of the Old Testament was hardly the Reformer's idiosyncratic quirk; Johann Gerhard adopted it.[24] Gerhard holds that baptism and circumcision cannot be equated, but both exhibit Christ's presence and are sacraments of initiation.[25] He agrees with Luther in seeing such things as the Old Testament sacrifices and the rainbow as sacraments. Unlike their New Testament counterparts, the Old Testament sacraments are limited in respect to time, but they are still sacraments in which Christ is present.[26] In Lutheran theology, the function and purpose of one sacrament, whether in the Old

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[22]Rohls, *Confessions,* 191.

[23]Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici,* edited by Edward Preuss (Berlin: Gustaf Schlawitz, 1866), 4:174 (18:60).

[24]Gerhard, *Loci.* 4:184 (18:46); 4:177 (18:64).

[25]Gerhard, *Loci.* 4:141 (18:10); 4:160-161 (18:44).

[26]This matter is scheduled for a future volume in The Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics series. It is briefly discussed in Scaer, *Baptism,* 31-33. One may also see David P. Scaer, "Sacraments as an Affirmation of Creation," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 54 (October 1993): 241-264; and David P. Scaer, "Luther, Baptism, and the Church Today," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 62 (October 1998): 247-268.

or New Testament, is not the same as another. For the Reformed, they are seals of grace and have the same content, and so distinctions among them are insignificant.[27]

5. Towards a Lutheran (Sacramental) Hermeneutic

Neo-Evangelical biblical scholarship correctly requires a biblical history as foundational, but, in defusing the Scriptures of the possibility of a sacramental interpretation, it preserves the classic Reformed belief, with its neo-Platonic underpinnings; that dead, transitory objects are not fit vehicles for "God as eternal, incomprehensible Spirit."[28] Among such contaminated objects are images such as crucifixes and the sacramental elements of water, bread, and wine.

Yes, the Scriptures are thoroughly historical, but past events are presented within a theological *Weltanschauung,* which, for Luther, included a Creator who was intimately involved with His creation and who was therefore thoroughly incarnational and sacramental. Lutherans, following their theological father, expect to find an abundance of incarnational and sacramental references everywhere in the Bible, an impossibility for neo-Evangelical scholars. The biblical evidences do not merely allow but require a distinction between the events (facts) and the Evangelists' theological reflection on the events. Only after the resurrection do Jesus' disciples come to a full understanding of the temple cleansing. Only with the bestowal of the Spirit do they have a complete theological reflection on what Jesus had done (John 15:26-27; 16:23). When the biblical events are treated in isolation from one another, that is, not as a post-Easter reflection of the apostles in the life of the church that was born in baptism and was nourished by the Lord's Supper, a non-sacramental reading of the biblical texts is inevitable.[29]

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[27]Rohls, *Confessions,* 191. This may provide an explanation, at least in part, why Karl Barth did not write a volume on the Lord's Supper.

[28]Rohls, *Confessions,* 48.

[29]Some contemporary critical scholars, in distinguishing between the event and later theological interpretations of the event, attempt to identify the steps from the event, which for them is often unrecoverable, and the final form in the Gospels. Much of this is speculation and rests on the unproven

The late Raymond Brown summed up the matter well.

> Moreover, among the four Gospels it is to John most of all that we owe the deep Christian understanding of the purpose of baptism and the eucharist. It is John who tells us that through the baptismal water God begets children unto Himself and pours forth upon His Spirit (iii 5, vii 37-39). Thus baptism becomes a source of eternal life (iv 13-14), just as the eucharist too is an indispensable means of transmitting God's life to men through Jesus (vi 57). In a symbolic way John shows that eucharistic wine means a new dispensation replacing the old (the Cana scene, and the description of the vine in ch. xv) and the eucharistic bread is the real bread replacing the manna (vi 32). Finally, in a dramatic scene (xix 34) John shows symbolically that both of these sacraments, baptismal water and sacramental blood, have the source of their existence and power in the death of Jesus.[30]

If we can find a magnificent sacramental theology in John, is there any reason to conclude that the Spirit of Jesus did not provide similar sacramental treasures in the other three Gospels, which we have both the happy obligation and freedom to

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assumption that Jesus and His immediate followers were not as theologically advanced as those who came later. Such methods are not without value in that the earliest church reflections on the Lord's Supper are seen to resemble closely what later became the classical Reformed view of a symbolical meal. Texts in their final form, as we have them in the Bible, were encrusted with views now associated with Lutherans and Catholics. Because the Gospels preserve both earlier and later reflections on the Last Supper, Lutherans and Reformed justified their accommodation as biblical with each other on the Lord's Supper in the *Formula of Agreement.* Though the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod rejected this kind of method, especially because it produced no certain knowledge about Jesus and divorced His teaching from that of the church, the biblical texts in their final form according to these scholars often supported a high Lutheran sacramentology. By assuming that the Gospels are written after the Epistles, some conservative Lutheran scholars perhaps unwittingly buy into this developmental concept of doctrine. It does support the general neo-Evangelical understanding that hesitates in recognizing sacramental texts.

[30]Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i-xii),* The Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1987), 1:cxiv.

uncover? As students of the Bible, we are happy to have the guidance of a Roman Catholic scholar like Brown, but we do not have to cross our own confessional boundaries. Luther and Johann Gerhard can be our guides.

Patristic Exegesis as Ecclesial and Sacramental

William C. Weinrich

Recently, a well-known television evangelist held aloft in his hand the Bible from which he was preaching. "This," he proclaimed with a loud voice, "is the eternal, ever-living word of God, which shall never pass away, shall never be destroyed, and shall never be conquered." This was foundational material for his message, that because the Bible was the "eternal, ever-living word of God," the counsel and direction it gives is certain for those who choose to follow it. What counsel and direction does it give? It provides direction for the victorious life characterized by prosperity, happiness, contentment, and, yes, the reception of all that one needs and desires—what one needing being roughly coterminous with what one desires. Why is it that this preacher, who holds such an exalted estimation of the Bible, does not see the Bible as possessing as its sole, all-encompassing message the death and resurrection of Jesus for the life of the world?

Perhaps the stage setting in which this preaching took place offers a clue. The stage was set up as though a comfortable living-room; the couches were spacious, allowing the people sitting there to adopt an informal, lounging posture, appropriate for casual conversation. The space was decorated with winding staircase, huge glass mirrors, and sizeable flora, all unmistakably suggesting comfort, ease, and prosperity. The dress code corresponded, slacks and casual sweaters being the attire of the day.

Despite asseverations to the contrary, style and substance do tend to follow one another. Might I suggest that the same is true of Bible study and interpretation. If the home Bible study becomes the interpretive context for reading and understanding the Bible, we should not be surprised if idiosyncratic and strange doctrines are derived from the text. The cozy question, "What does the Bible mean to you?" is a sure-fire method for ensuring that the message of the Scriptures according to its own intrinsic and given meaning will ultimately be lost.

The context in which the Bible is read and expounded is not unimportant to its interpretation. That raises an interesting question. Why is it that in the context of the church's worship and liturgy, and most especially in the context of the church's sacramental action, the Bible is read at all? This may seem to be a self-evident question. Yet, often those practices that seem most evident are those which hide considerable significance. Do we read the Bible in the context of the church's worship because this text is the traditional text, the text of our history presenting to us the interpretative symbols of our particular community? Or, do we read the Bible because this text is thought to be the inspired, inerrant text whose words to us are reliable and can be trusted as we strive to fulfill its precepts and to believe its words?

The early church was not unacquainted with questions such as these and had an answer to them. The Scriptures are read in the church because the Scriptures are the church's book. For the Scriptures to be read outside the church or apart from the church is for them to be decontextualized. That is, read apart from the church, the Scriptures are abstracted from and placed apart from those realities to which they in fact refer.

To put this in a somewhat provocative manner, the biblical text is not in any absolute sense its own context. For it to be considered, as it were, alone and unto itself, is for it ultimately to become a hidden and undecipherable book, open to various meanings as it finds—as it must—new contexts for its interpretation. If it is true, as a recent article claims, that Jesus has become a "growth industry" because "he lends himself so agreeably to '90s values" and "comes dressed up in the clothes of our own culture," we would be wholly naive to think that the Bible itself is immune from similar metamorphoses. If Jesus is especially popular because people want "an easily translatable God," one which is tradition free, context free, and generic,[1] it is not surprising that in our time, when the Bible is a money-

[1]One may see "It's Trendy to Love Jesus Now," *The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, January 16, 1999, 4A.

making best seller, the people reading it are non-committal concerning the church and illiterate concerning its doctrinal substance.

How then did the early church consider the Scriptures and the reading and interpretation of them? Let us first make the general observation that in their comment on the Scriptures the fathers were not primarily interested in the historical or grammatical significance of the text. To be sure, the fathers were often thoroughly acquainted with the grammatical and literary critical methods taught in the secular, pagan schools. This is clear from the rhetorical sophistication of Melito of Sardis and the complexity of Cappadocian textual argument. Nonetheless, although grammatical and literary methods could be used, and often were used, they did not determine the message of the text. Indeed, it is possible that the fathers did not think such methods even necessary to understand the message of the Scriptures. They often argue issues of grammar and literary criticism to counter arguments of heretics and other false interpreters. But the foundation upon which the fathers stood to read and to interpret the Scriptures lies elsewhere.

To put the point simply, but completely, the foundation upon which early Christian interpretation rested was Christ. Robert Wilken has compared the comments of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the prophesy of Isaiah 2 with those of Jerome, Cyril of Alexandria, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus. Isaiah prophesied concerning the return of the people to Jerusalem:

> It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us His ways and that we may walk in His paths" (Isaiah 2:2-3).

Theodore, perhaps the most consistent of Antiochene exegetes, insists on giving only a grammatical, historical interpretation to the text of Isaiah, and for that reason refuses to

give to it any messianic interpretation. Theodore writes: "I do not know how one could be brought to say that [these things spoken by the prophet about the return from Babylon] are a type of the events that took place at the time of the Lord Christ. For it is clear that every type has a correspondence to the thing of which it is type."[2]

Theodore was working from a particular definition of what constituted a type, and he did not see the required "correspondences" to conclude that the Old Testament prophecy concerning the return from Babylon had the events of Christ in mind. Literary assumptions and convictions determined biblical interpretation. For their understanding of the prophecy of Isaiah, on the other hand, Jerome, Cyril, and Theodoret, took as key the indication of time that begins chapter 2: "It shall come to pass *in the last days* that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains." They discerned in this indication of time the economy of divine activity which made any reference in the Isaianic text to the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple impossible and made reference rather to Christ and to His church necessary, for in them the last days had come. In his comments, Theodoret cites the quotation of Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2:17 and following and notes that, unlike Joel, Luke began the passage with the words "in the last days." Secondly, Theodoret cites Hebrews 1:1, "In many and various ways God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets, but in these last days God has spoken to us by His Son."[3] In the coming of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, that is, in the establishment of the apostolic church, the "last days" had come. Any reference to the "last days" in the Old Testament must necessarily refer to Christ and to His church.

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[2]Robert Wilken, "*In novissimis diebus* : Biblical Promises, Jewish Hopes, and Early Christian Exegesis," in *Remembering the Christian Past* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 95-119. This quote of Theodore, from his *Commentary on Micah*, is on page 105.

[3]Wilken, "*In novissimis diebus* ," 116.

What determined the interpretation of the Scriptures, therefore, was not a particular literary theory, nor the definitions of tropes, hyperbole, types, and the like, nor any theory of semantics and communication. What determined interpretation was a particular set of historical events—the salvific events of the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus. When Ignatius of Antioch was in dispute with certain Judaizing Christians in Philadelphia, he answered their claim that they would not believe something to be in the gospel if it could not be found in the "ancient texts" by responding, "To me the ancient texts are Jesus Christ, the sacred archives are His cross and His death and His resurrection and the faith which is through Him."[4] The history of Jesus Christ determined what was to be perceived in the Old Testament; prophecy did not determine what the fulfillment would be, but that which was intended by God as His final and consummating purpose, the fulfillment, determined what was given by the Spirit to the prophets to say and to do.

It is true, then, that patristic exegesis was first and foremost Christological. When Christ opened the minds of the apostles to understand the Scriptures and said that His sufferings and resurrection and the apostolic preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins to the nations were the content of the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-49), He simply catechized them to do what then they did, preach Christ on the basis of the Scriptures because they testify of Him. This apostolic preaching is nowhere more significantly and canonically stated than in the four Gospels, which are nothing other than the record of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament writings and of the institutions of Israel concerning which they speak. The four Gospels are the exposition of the Old Testament in terms of its messianic fulfillment. Not to read the Old Testament documents in terms of their Christological

[4]Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Phil.* 8:2. One may see *The Epistles of Saint Clement of Rome and Saint Ignatius of Antioch*, translated by James A. Kleist (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Bookshop; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1961), 85-89.

meaning is to rob them of their teleological and eschatological intention.

Allow me to illustrate. The prophet Zechariah speaks of the "day of the Lord" in terms of the symbolism and rites of the Festival of Tabernacles: "On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea" (Zechariah 14:8). When the Evangelist John reports that Jesus, in Jerusalem during the Festival of Tabernacles, cries out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink, as the Scripture says, 'Out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water,'" he lays the basis for the later report that when the soldiers thrust the spear into the side of Jesus water and blood came flowing out. If, as John would have it, the prophecy of the living waters that were to flow out from Jerusalem on the "day of the Lord" finds its fulfillment in the passion of Jesus, where is the "new Jerusalem" of which the New Testament speaks to be located? Clearly the "new Jerusalem" exists there where the death of the Lord is located, in the preaching of the crucified, in the baptism into His death, and in the body and blood given and shed. In "the last days" things Old Testament become themselves re-contextualized. In this case, the "new Jerusalem" is no longer to be regarded as part of geographical Israel, and therefore bound up in struggles of near eastern geo-political strife. The "new Jerusalem" is the home of spiritual Israel, the church, in which the crucified continues to be proffered in preaching and the sacraments. It is, therefore, wholly commensurate with this Christological and ecclesial understanding that at the beginning of the eucharistic service the hymn, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me?" is sung. This introductory hymn concludes with these words: "I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem."[5] To be in the liturgy of the church is to be in the "new Jerusalem." Not coincidentally, therefore, Saint Paul speaks of Israel having been baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and having

[5]*Lutheran Worship* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 188.

eaten and drunk the supernatural food and drink and then refers these narratives to us "upon whom the consummation of the age has come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

It is precisely this conviction, that in Christ and His church the "end of the age" has come, that governs patristic exegesis and makes it Christological and ecclesial. A few examples will illustrate. In his letter to the Smyrnaeans, Ignatius of Antioch (died about A.D. 110) presents an anti-docetic creedal form which ends like this: "in reality (ἀληθῶς) He was nailed in the flesh under Pontius Pilate and Herod . . . in order that He might raise up a standard for the ages through the resurrection for His saints and faithful, whether among the Jews or among the Gentiles, in the one body of His church."[6] The raising of the standard refers to certain Old Testament prophecies, which speak of God raising an ensign/standard in the last days to which His people in diaspora, and also the Gentiles, would gather.[7] Commentators on Ignatius are virtually unanimous in the view that for Ignatius this standard is the cross of Christ, and I concur with that view. However, it does not sufficiently interpret Ignatius' meaning. The creedal form of Ignatius says that this standard shall be raised "in the one body of His church." But where, for Ignatius, is the passion of Christ "in the one body of His church"? Reading Ignatius, it would be difficult not to conclude that the passion of Christ in the one body of the church is the eucharist. Typically, therefore, Ignatius speaks of the gathering around the eucharist in wholly eschatological terms:

> Be zealous, therefore, to come together more often unto the eucharist of God and unto glory. For whenever you are often in one place, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and the ruination that he causes is done away within the harmony of your faith. Nothing is better than peace, in which every warfare in heaven and on earth is overcome.[8]

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[6]Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Smyrn.* 8:2. One may see *The Epistles of Saint Clement of Rome and Saint Ignatius of Antioch*, 90-95.

[7]For example, Isaiah 5:26; 11:10,12; 18:3; 49:22; 62:10.

[8]Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Eph.* 13. One may see *The Epistles of Saint Clement*

With this eucharistic center of Ignatian thinking in mind, one reads other passages differently than one might otherwise. For example, take this passage from his letter to the church in Philadelphia, which more extensively than any other expresses the view of Ignatius concerning the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament:

> Indeed the priests were good, but better is the High Priest who has been entrusted with the Holy of Holies, who alone has been entrusted with the hidden things of God. He Himself is the door of the Father, through whom enter Abraham and Isaak and Jacob and the prophets and the apostles and the church. All of these things into the unity of God. The gospel possesses something distinctive, namely, the presence of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, His passion and resurrection. For the beloved prophets proclaimed in view of Him, but the gospel is the completion of incorruption. And all things taken together are good, if you are faithful in agape.[9]

Here Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood, the fulfillment of the preaching of the prophets, and also the fulfillment of the patriarchal history. He is also the door for the apostles and the church. All the canonical history has its fulfilled center in Him. But this Christological center is found in what Ignatius calls the "unity of God" and the "agape." In my reading of Ignatius, I find it impossible to interpret "the unity of God" and the "agape" as anything other than the eucharistic gathering of the church, an interpretation that the mention of the "Holy of Holies" in this passage supports. For Ignatius, the church in its eucharistic assembly is gathered around the passion of Jesus, which is "our resurrection," and this is the "completion of incorruptibility."

Because the ecclesial and sacramental realities are regarded as the true and final referents of Old Testament prophetic event and oracle, it is evident why a typological exegesis occurs so

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of Rome and Saint Ignatius of Antioch, 60-68.

[9]Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Phil.* 9:1-2.

often in preaching that is explicitly liturgical and sacramental. The eventful character of the church's sacramental liturgy sums up and brings to completion the events of the Old Testament covenant. An outstanding instance of this is the paschal homily of Melito of Sardis (died about A.D. 190). Melito begins by explicitly referring to the exodus narrative of the Old Testament, which clearly has just been read to the gathered Christians: "The Scripture from the Hebrew Exodus has been read and the words of the mystery have been plainly stated."[10] Immediately, Melito introduces the interpretative-homiletic device of typology:

> Understand (ξύνετε), therefore, O beloved, how it is new and old, eternal and temporary, perishable and imperishable, mortal and immortal, this mystery of the Pascha . . . . Old is the law but new the Word; temporary the type but eternal the grace; perishable the sheep, imperishable the Lord. . . . For the type indeed existed, but then the reality (ἀλήθεια) appeared.[11]

After giving a summary of the paschal narrative in the book of Exodus, Melito compares the Old Testament narrative to the preliminary sketch of a sculptor:

> This is what occurs in the case of a preliminary sketch; it does not arise as a [finished] work, but [it exists] on behalf of that thing which is going to be seen on the basis of this image which is serving as a model. The sketch is made out of wax or clay or wood on behalf of that which is going to be. . . . But when that of which it is type has come, that which bore the image of the future thing is destroyed, having become useless, the image of it yielding to that which is really true (τῷ φύσει ἀληθεῖ). That which once was precious becomes worthless, when that which is precious by nature is manifested.[12]

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[10]Melito of Sardis, *Peri Pasha* 1. The Greek text and an English translation are available in *On Pascha and Fragments*, texts and translations edited by Stuart George Hall (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1979).

[11]Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, 2, 4.

[12]Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, 36.

What is this "future thing" which is "precious by nature"? Melito gives the answer:

> For the salvation of the Lord and the realities (ἀλήθεια) were prefigured in the people, and the decrees of the gospel were proclaimed beforehand by the law. The people then was a type by way of a preliminary sketch, and the law was the writing of a parable; the gospel is the recounting and fulfillment of the law, and the church is the repository of the reality (τῆς ἀληθείας).[13]

As the remainder of the homily indicates, the Christian Pascha is not only the fulfillment of the Exodus narrative; it is also the fulfillment of all history. For in explaining the "Pascha," Melito recounts the creation, the fall, the spread of sinful destruction throughout the world, and then he summarizes the "prior arrangements for [Christ's] own sufferings" in the patriarchs, in the prophets, and in the whole people. This recounting of the biblical narrative has as its purpose that the people might learn "who is the suffering one, and who shares the suffering of the suffering one, and why the Lord is present on the earth to clothe Himself with the suffering one and carry him off to the heights of heaven."[14] Here the "suffering one" is Adam and all humankind who suffer with him, and the one "who shares the suffering of the suffering one" is Christ who is come from heaven in order that the "suffering one," that is, Adam, might be exalted to heaven with Christ. This is the meaning of the Christian Pascha.

In the writings of Irenaeus of Lyons (died about A.D. 200) we have an especially trenchant and thoroughgoing hermeneutical reflection that both elicits and, as well, is grounded in a narrative biblical theology. Irenaeus was facing a spiritualizing Gnosticism, which, in its rejection of God as the Creator, regarded all things of the created order and of the flesh, including all historical events and all literal words, as external symbol of that which was, in fact, real, namely the divine

[13]Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, 39-43, here especially 40.
[14]Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, 46.

Fullness, or Pleroma. Because no concrete and particular thing had any intrinsic meaning but was mere image of a higher, spiritual order, created things had no specific relation to one another. This meant that neither the actual works of God, nor the scriptural narratives had any meaningful order or sequence. This did not mean that the Gnostics did not quote the Scriptures; in fact, they used the Scriptures as much as the orthodox did. The problem was that the Gnostics, having no regard for the inherent order of things or the proper relation of one thing to another, "violently draw away from their proper connection, words and expressions and parables" to adapt the oracles of God to their own made-up storyline. They "disregard the order and connection of the Scriptures and dismember and destroy the members of the Truth," transferring passages, dressing them up in different ways, and making one thing out of another. In a well-known passage, Irenaeus likens the Gnostic use of Scripture to a person who, coming upon the pieces of a shattered statue, attempts to put the statue together again but arranges the pieces falsely so that they come to depict a fox, when in fact the original statue was of a king.[15] However, should someone know the original statue and again arrange the pieces, but this time in proper order, the image of the fox would immediately be disproven as a proper rendering of the pieces. So it is for that person "who retains unchangeable in his heart the rule of the Truth which he received by means of baptism." This person will recognize the biblical names, expressions, and stories used by the Gnostics. But restoring each of them to its proper position and fitting them all into "the body of the Truth," he will both lay bare the false understanding of the heretic and restore to the Scripture its own intrinsic and true meaning.

To comprehend the full significance of Irenaeus' argument, we must briefly consider what he means by the phrase "the body of the Truth." The word "Truth" does not refer primarily

[15]Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.8.1. An English translation is available in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, volume 1, The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), 315-567.

to the truth value of the church's doctrines or to the truth value of the statements of Scripture. For Irenaeus the "Truth" is the actual saving and revealing acts of God from the beginning work of creation to the incarnation of the Word and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The "Truth" is not the spiritual Pleroma of the Gnostic imagination; it is that which is real and concrete and historical and personal, precisely because it is the work of Him who is known only as our Creator. However, this "Truth" begins with the creation and moves through the election of Israel, the patriarchs, the giving of the law, the proclamation of the prophets, and finally receives its consummation in the reality of the incarnated Word and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The "Truth," therefore, has an intrinsic structure and sequence, an order given by God Himself in the facticity of His temporal, economic activity, which, again, reaches from creation to the coming of the Spirit in the incarnation of the Word and the constitution of the church. It was this economy, intended by God from the beginning, that was imprinted by the prophetic Spirit upon the minds of the prophets so that they foresaw and foretold, albeit in type and enigma, that the One through whom all was made would at the last times be made man. Similarly, when the last times had in truth arrived in the coming of the enfleshed Word and the Spirit, this economy took shape in the minds of the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. For that reason, the apostolic preachment proclaimed the Christ and the reality of the church as the consummation of the creative intent of the God, which He had foreshadowed and foretold in the election of Israel, the patriarchs, the giving of the law, and the proclamation of the prophets.[16]

In his *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, Irenaeus begins by speaking of faith and "Truth." On the basis of Isaiah 7:9 (LXX), "If you do not have faith, you will not understand,"

[16]One may see Thomas F. Torrance, "Kerygmatic Proclamation of the Gospel: The Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching of Irenaios of Lyons," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 37 (Spring-Winter 1992): 105-121, especially 108-109.

Irenaeus argues that faith rests on things that truly exist. "For we believe in the things that are, as they are, and believing in things that are, as they are, we keep firm confidence in them. Since faith is intimately bound up with our salvation, we must take great care to have a true understanding of the things that are."[17]

However, this faith, which is grounded on the things that are, namely the Truth, is given in the real thing of baptism. The doctrine handed down from the apostles exhorts us "to remember that we have received baptism for remission of sins in the Name of God the Father, and in the Name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became incarnate and died and was raised, and in the Holy Spirit of God; and that this baptism is the seal of eternal life and is rebirth unto God, that we be no more children of mortal men, but of the eternal and everlasting God."[18] Baptism into the Triune God is the summation and completion of that economy of works that were begun at creation and "in the end of times" were ended in the incarnation of the Word for the abolition of death, the bringing of life to light, and the effecting of the communion of God with man, and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a new manner upon humanity over all the earth renewing man to God.[19] We can see in this reflection of Irenaeus that the creed of the church is not merely a human production of faith; nor is it the result of a deduction process of reading the Scriptures. The creed, precisely in its trinitarian structure and sequence, is a summary of the "Truth," which reaches its consummation in baptism. The movement of the creed from Father, through Son, ending in the Holy Spirit, is nothing other than the very structure of God's economic activity, also proclaimed through the prophets and the apostles in the narrative of the Scriptures. Both statements are

[17]Irenaeus, *Epideixis* 3; one may also see Torrance, "Kerygmatic Preaching," 106-107. For a translation of the original, one may see *Saint Irenaios. The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, translated from the Armenian with introduction and notes by J. Armitage Robinson (London, 1920).

[18]Irenaeus, *Epideixis*, 3.

[19]Irenaeus, *Epideixis*, 6; also *Epideixis* 7.

true: the creed is a summary of the prophet and apostolic Scriptures, and the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures are the canonical commentary on the creed. For this reason, the creed is a certain key for the interpretation of the Scriptures. Moreover, the reality of baptism itself is a hermeneutical reality for understanding the Scriptures, for it is the reality of the death and resurrection of the incarnate Word for us, given to us by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life. In baptism we enter "the end of times" and become ourselves that which the prophets foresaw and foretold.

So far we have remained within the patristic literature of the second century. However, the rich literature of the fourth and fifth centuries continues the same interpretive interest. As representative of the developed patristic argument, the work entitled "Concerning the Incarnation and Against the Arians," often attributed to Marcellus of Ancyra, is a good source. The Arians were using the passages concerning the poverty of the Son to argue that He could not be co-essential with God the Father: "How can He be similar [to the Father] or how is He from the essence of the Father, when it is written, 'As the Father has life in Himself, so He has given also to the Son to have life in Himself.'" There is a superiority, the Arians claimed, of the One giving over the one receiving.[20] Therefore, such passages in Scripture that say that God gave something to the Christ indicate that the Word Himself was in some way promoted and improved, and that therefore the nature of the Word is alterable and not divine. However, writes Marcellus, "the entire and precise significance of Christianity is found in lowly words and deeds" (πάσα δὲ ἀκρίβεια τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ ἐν τοῖς εὐτελέσι ῥήμασι καὶ πράγμασιν), and he quotes Paul to establish his hermeneutical and doctrinal principle: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how, although He was rich, yet He

[20]*De Incarnatione Dei Verbi, et contra Arianos* 1 (from now on, *De Incarn. et c. Ar.*). The Scripture passage cited is John 5:26. Other passages which the Arians were using included Mark 10:18; Matt. 26:32; Mark 13:32; John 10:36; Galatians 1:1. The text of *De Incarnatione Dei Verbi, et contra Arianos* may be found in Migne, *Patrologia Graece*, 26.984-1028.

became poor for our sakes, so that we by His poverty might become rich."[21] In the light of this Pauline guidance, Marcellus undertakes to explain the "force of these words" (namely, the passages of lowliness) "according to our ability." When Paul says that "the Father has raised His Son from the dead" (Galatians 1:1), we learn also from John that Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," and that He said this concerning His body. Therefore, concludes Marcellus, in passages of lowliness and humility, what is said about the person of the Word, is said about His body. When it is written that the Father has given life to His Son, we are to understand that it is to Christ's flesh that life has been given.[22] There follows a brief reflection on the incarnation:

> For the Most High is not exalted (that is, the Son considered according to His own nature) but the flesh of the Most High is exalted. . . . The Word of God does not receive the right to be called "God" by grace, but His flesh with Himself is called "God" (ἐθεολογήθη). It did not say that the Word became God, but that the Word was God. It says that the Word was eternally God, and that this very One who is God became flesh, in order that His flesh might become God the Word. [23]

The incarnation is such that the flesh is not attached to the Word so that it exists in external relation to the Word, nor is the flesh merely possessed by the Word. Rather, the incarnation is such that the flesh is assumed into the Person of the Word, so that the flesh itself becomes Word. The man, Jesus, is the divine Word. Therefore, writes Marcellus, "When it is said in Scripture that the Son has received, or that the Son has been glorified, it is said because of his humanity and not because of His divinity."[24]

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[21]*De Incarn. et c. Ar* . 1. The quote from Paul is 2 Corinthians 8:9.
[22]*De Incarn. et c. Ar.* 2.
[23]*De Incarn. et c. Ar.* 3.
[24]*De Incarn. et c. Ar.* 4.

However, this Christological reflection does not simply serve to define the person of Christ, so that, as it were, in the narrative of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and exaltation He alone was being considered. This Christological reflection serves the interpretative task of perceiving in the Scriptures the narrative of salvation for us. And this was the huge difference between the Arian and the orthodox hermeneutic. While the Arians read the gospel narratives as though they were simply about the Son, so that the language of lowliness suggested immediately that He was by nature lowly, the orthodox read the gospel narratives within a different thematic context, namely, as the narrative of our salvation through Christ and, perhaps even more importantly, in Christ. As Marcellus writes: "The immortal God did not come to save Himself, but to save those who had died; and He did not suffer on His own behalf, but for us; so that for this reason did He take on Himself our lowliness and poverty, in order that He might by grace give to us His richness."[25]

And now comes the real point:

> When He therefore says, "The Lord created me as the beginning of His ways," He is speaking concerning the church which is created in Him. For the Maker of all things is neither created nor made, but that which is made is being renewed in Him who is the Maker, as Paul said: "We are His workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus."[26]

And again, a little later:

> Whatsoever the Scripture says that the Son received, it says concerning His Body, which Body is the first-fruit of the church. For Christ is the first-fruit. Therefore, when the first-fruit received the Name which is above every name, also the lump was raised with Him in power and was seated with Him, according to what was said: "He raised us and enthroned us with [Him]."[27]

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[25]*De Incarn. et c. Ar.* 5.
[26]*De Incarn. et c. Ar. 6*
[27]*De Incarn. et c. Ar.* 12.

And where does this "raising" and "enthroning" take place? In his comments on John 17:11 ("Let them be one as we are one"), Athanasius gives an answer. Because the flesh of Christ is the constituting reality of the church, those united to it by way of baptism participate in eternal life "no longer as men but as proper to the Word" (ἴδιοι τοῦ Λόγου). This is because in baptism

> our origin (γενέσεως) and our infirmity of flesh has been transferred to the Word . . . so that being born again from above through water and the Spirit, in Christ we are all made alive, the flesh no longer being earthly but having been made Word (λογωθείσης) through the Word of God who for us became flesh.[28]

In a similar way, Leo the Great maintains that the personal unity of Christ's two natures reveals "the mystery of regeneration," for "through the self-same Spirit through whom Christ was conceived and born, we too, who were born through the desire of the flesh, might be born again from a spiritual source."[29] In baptism the story of the restoration of humankind in Him who is the Second Adam becomes our story, that is, the story concerning us. Not that it happens in us again, as it was with Christ, but that we, being made one with Him, participate in His story, narrated apostolically, that is, canonically, in the narratives of the four Gospels.

Ambrose tells us that in the Church at Milan the newly baptized chanted Psalm 23 as they processed from the baptistry to the church for their first eucharist. This is what he says to those who a few days before traversed this way:

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[28]Athanasius, *Orat. c. Ar.* 3.33. The text of *Orationes contra Arianos* may be found in Migne, *Patrologia Graece,* 26.321-468. An English translation is available in "Four Discourses against the Arians" in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 4, Saint Athanasius: Select Works and Letters,* edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), 411-412.

[29]Leo the Great, *Epistle,* 31.3, in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 12, Leo the Great, Gregory the Great,* edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), 45.

> How often have you heard Psalm 23 and not understood it! See how it is applicable to the heavenly sacraments: "The Lord feeds me and I shall want nothing; He has set me in a place of pasture; He has brought me upon the water of refreshment; He has converted my soul. He has led me on the paths of justice for His own name's sake. For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for you are with me. Your rod is power, the staff suffering, that is, the eternal divinity of Christ, but also corporeal suffering; the one created, the other redeemed. You have prepared a table before me against them that afflict me. You have anointed my head with oil; and my chalice which inebriates me how goodly it is!"[30]

This is a perfect example of an ecclesial and sacramental reading of the Scriptures. It is not allegory, a fanciful imposition of meaning upon an otherwise clear and literal meaning of an Old Testament text. It is to read that Old Testament text in the light of its full and consummated intention, that in those acts that Christ instituted that He might be for us in them, we are the true referents of the Scripture. They speak of us.

According to the seventh century Gelasian Sacramentary, after the exorcism those to be baptized receive the four Gospels. "Stand in silence and listen attentively," proclaimed the deacon, as he then read the beginning verses of the four gospels. After this, the baptizands receive the creed and are told, "With attentive minds you must learn the creed, and what we hand on to you just as we received it, you must write on the pages of your heart rather than on any easily destroyed material." To read the Gospels aright is to know the creed, and to know the creed is to know the content of the Scriptures. Christians knew this in the early middle ages. It is time that we learn it again.

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[30]Ambrose, *On the Sacraments* 5:13. An English translation is available in *Saint Ambrose: Theological and Dogmatic Works*, translated by Roy J. Deferrari (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 269-328.

Friedrich August Crämer: Faithful Servant in Christ's Church

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

"If something is wrong, and something always is, then it is natural to try and find a cause."[1] This captures well, in part, what an historian does: looks for the causes of the problems in the world. The church historian's contribution to the life of the church is sometimes viewed in this way as well: "Tell us where we went wrong, so that we won't go wrong again in the future." More than one hearer has accused an historian of cynicism for the critical, at times unflattering, picture he has painted of the church. That, however, captures only a portion of what the church historian does. While the canons of historical inquiry require that the bad be told, they also leave opportunity for the good to be held up for examination as well. One of the joys of the historical endeavor is to tell the story that has a happy ending. The greatest joy, however, is to be able to engage in the examination of the faithful response of an individual to the call of Christ to work in the harvest field. That is exactly what emerges when one considers the life and work of Friedrich August Crämer: faithful servant in Christ's church.[2]

Crämer's obituary, which appeared in the *Lutheran Witness* of May 7, 1891, captures the triumphant hope of Christian

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[1]Gavin White, *How the Churches Got to Be the Way They Are* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 61.

[2]One of the more perplexing issues for the narrator of Crämer's story is how to name him. He is variously referred to as Friedrich August and August Friedrich. His diplomas, ordination certificate, and marriage certificate, all of which are preserved in the collection of Concordia Historical Institute, offer conflicting evidence. This paper will use the form advanced by "seinem ältesten Freunde," Lochner, and use Friedrich August. In the end, Crämer was simply referred to as "August."

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certitude, as well as the collective grief of the synod over the passing of one of its founding fathers. It read:

> Rev. Prof. A. Crämer now sleeps the sweet sleep of the Righteous. It is our sad duty to chronicle the bereavement of our synod and the Springfield Seminary by the demise of Rev. Prof. A. Crämer, late senior professor of our synod and president of our Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Ills. At this late date, May 3d, we can only state, that he had been suffering from a sever attack of the grippe, and fell asleep in Jesus on the 3d of May at 3.50 A.M. His funeral took place on Ascension day, May 7th.

This paper narrates the remarkable story of Friedrich August Crämer's life, and the vigor with which he pursued the calling of the ministry of service. His life divides itself readily into two triads: (1) his youth and early trials; (2) the wandering time; and (3) the confessional leader of Concordia Theological Seminary. Within this last section the second triad emerges: (1) Fort Wayne; (2) Saint Louis; and, finally, (3) Springfield. From this brief consideration of his life, a picture true to this paper's title emerges.[3]

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[3]The most accessible biography is Ludwig Fuerbringer, "The 'Iron Man' of the Franconian Fathers of our Church: Augustus Friedrich Crämer," in *Persons and Events: Reminiscences of Ludwig Ernest Fuerbringer* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 1-31. The best biography is by Crämer's close friend, Friedrich Lochner, which was published as "Ehrengedächtnis des seligen herrn Friedrich August Crämer, Professors der Theologie und Directors des practisch-theologischen Seminars zu Springfield, Ill." It appeared in series in *Der Lutheraner* from September 1891 to April 1892. An edited translation of this biography, without attribution, is in the collection of the Concordia Historical Institute. Other helpful pieces include William G. Polack, "Frederick August Craemer (1812-1891)," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 7 (September 1938): 704-709; "Prof. A. Craemer," *Lutheran Witness* (May 21, 1891); M. Luecke, "Brief Sketch of the Rev. Prof. A. Craemer," *Lutheran Witness* (May 7, 1897); Theodore Graebner, *Church Bells in the Forest: A Story of Lutheran Pioneer Work on the Michigan Frontier 1840-1850* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944); Theodore Gräbner, *Lutherische Pioniere II. Die frankenkolonien des Saginawtales* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919). The biographical data in this essay are drawn from these sources.

Youth and Early Life

Crämer was born on May 26, 1812 in Kleinlangheim, Lower Franconia, Bavaria, near to Würzburg, the eldest son of a merchant father. His home was typically German and featured strict discipline. His mother devoted herself to his education in the fundamentals of the Christian faith as taught in Luther's Small Catechism, and encouraged him, sometimes forcibly, to attend divine service diligently. His earliest schooling was from a neighboring pastor, a good friend of his father's, who instructed him in the rudiments of Latin. Later, August entered the gymnasium at Würzburg, where he distinguished himself as a student, and passed with a "vorzüglich würdig" for university work. In 1830 he entered into his university studies at Erlangen, where he mainly studied theology and philosophy.[4]

It was at Erlangen that the first important turn of his life occurred. Crämer came under the influence of the so-called *Burschenschaft Germania,* and eventually moved up in its ranks to significant positions of leadership. The *Germania* had a notable history dedicated to the reunification of Germany. Following the Napoleonic invasions of the early part of the century, the German Empire was dissolved in 1806 and divided into a number of individual states. "This political situation gave much concern to many, particularly to students, who considered themselves called upon to open the way for the political unity of Germany and to help create anew the old (Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.)"[5] They were of the opinion that Germany would be lost without Christianity. Over the years a number of *Burschenschaften,* or student associations, were organized in order to keep this idea alive, and, it was hoped, eventually to bring about German reunification. The government, however, was less than enthusiastic about this type of activity, and suppressed the movement. Still, during the years immediately prior to Crämer's arrival at Erlangen, one of these societies, the *Germania* previously mentioned, had again

[4]Other subjects included logic, metaphysics, physics, psychology, and history.

[5]Fuerbringer, "Iron Man," 4-5.

emerged. Carl Manthey-Zorn described the intense character of the student's experience in the *Burschenschaft Germania*:

> In the first year of his membership in the Germania, the Student was called a *Fuchs*, fox, and after that he was a *Bursch*. Dueling held the chief attention and was carried on according to strict rules. The weapon most commonly used was a rapier, a straight sword which was kept very sharp at the lower twelve inches or so. Each fighter's eyes, throat, right arm, and the lower part of his body was wrapped for some protection. The duel lasted a prescribed time or until one of the two was incapacitated. There was an umpire, a neutral. Each fighter brought his physician and a second. Never a word or sign of fear or of pain! The *Burschenschaft Germania* was known to be especially wild and forceful in its actions. Its duelings went to some very great lengths.[6]

The determination of this group attracted the serious young student and he quickly distinguished himself as its president. The times were ripe for action, when in July 1832, legislation was passed that compromised the *Burschenschaften's* freedom. The *Germania* joined together with *Burschenschaften* from all over Germany, who sent their leaders to Frankfort am Main to take over strategic political and social targets, hoping to start a revolution. The date was set for April 3, 1833. The authorities, however, received word of the "putsch" and subdued the revolutionaries within the hour. Crämer was taken prisoner, charged with treason, and jailed while he awaited trial. He waited for three years before his case was heard. His punishment was another three years imprisonment, which may have lasted longer had Frederick Thiersch not intervened. Thiersch, a professor of philology at Munich, managed to secure Crämer's release in June 1839 on the condition that Crämer prove worthy of his probation.

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[6]"The Early Years of Carl Manthey-Zorn," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 31 (October 1958): 87.

The Wandering Years

This proved to be another turning point in Crämer's life. He assumed that, having been convicted of political activities against the state, he would now never receive a ministerial position in the state church. Further, having spent a significant portion of his short life in prison, he was determined to move quickly forward in his newly chosen field in the hope that he might eventually achieve a satisfactory position and perhaps even a professorship. As a result, he turned to the study of philology, and pursued that field with the same vigor that previously characterized his political aspirations. In early 1840 he entered Thiersch's philological institute at Munich. There he studied ancient Greek, modern Greek, old and middle High German, French, and English.

The change in career was also marked by a change in his spiritual life. Though trained by his mother in the catechism, and later a student of theology at Erlangen, it appears from Crämer's own words that he was mainly interested in theology as an intellectual pursuit. It was only when a devastating illness came upon him that he turned to religion as a means of comfort in distress. As he contemplated what seemed to be certain death, he broke down. "The lightning of Sinai struck me and made a deep impression in my mind. My sins were like mountains before me and the waters of God's wrath encompassed me, the terrors of death and hell." In the midst of his deepest despair, though, the words of the catechism, taught to him so many years before by his mother, proved his only source of comfort. "Jesus Christ has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil." He learned to make this deduction: "If Christ has redeemed lost and condemned sinners, then He has redeemed me also; because everything in me and in my life is lost, I am damned on account of my sins into the abyss of hell; therefore Christ's blood, which He has shed for me, Christ's death, which He suffered for me, also applies to

me."[7] Ludwig Fuerbringer summarized this break-through experience as follows:

> In this way Crämer became a Christian, a Lutheran Christian, through the Biblical Lutheran doctrine of reconciliation and justification, and he remained such a Christian throughout his long life; he penetrated deeper and deeper into this central doctrine of Christianity, gradually attained greater insight, and testified and battled for this doctrine, confessed it from the pulpit and in lecture halls, confirmed it in life and conduct, and finally sealed it with his death.[8]

His life, however, was still in transition. By December 1841 he finished his course of study, and, with the recommendation of Thiersch, was engaged as a tutor in the court of the Saxon Duke of Einsiedel. His task was to prepare the Duke's son for the university. In the company of this family, Crämer was further exposed to the confessional reawakening among German Lutherans. Duke Carl von Einsiedel attended the services of Saint John Church, Dresden, where Martin Stephan had been the pastor before leading the Saxon immigration to Saint Louis and Perry County, Missouri. A Christian spirit is said to have permeated the family and the household. During the next two years Crämer was often with the family, traveling to their estate in Bohemia, and even to Italy. But he seemed unsatisfied. In 1843 he informed the Duke of his desire to move on to something new. The Duke's high estimation for Crämer appears in the following statement:

> It is hereby witnessed of Mr. August Crämer of Kleinlangheim, candidate of philology, that he has from July 1, 1841 till now taken care of the rearing and education of my son. Mr. Crämer, who has a thorough knowledge of the usual fields of instruction, as also of the classical, of French and English, "Zeichnen," and gymnastic drills, combines this with the ability to impart his knowledge

[7]Fuerbringer, "Iron Man," 7; one may also see Polack, "Craemer," 705.
[8]Fuerbringer, "Iron Man," 8.

> easily to his students. His very good deportment, Christian life, great ambition, and unwavering loyalty make him very fit for the profession which he has chosen, namely that of a pedagogue. I have not only had the above mentioned qualifications to observe, but have actually seen his mettle tested on various occasions during two years. But since now Mr. Crämer, to my honest regret, wants to give up the position in my household for reasons which I will not oppose but can only honor and respect, I consider myself obligated to prepare for him this true certificate with the hope that it may be of use to him in this future endeavors. Franzensbad near Eger, June 24, 1843.[9]

Duke Carl suggested that Crämer travel to England, and used his influence to secure a position for Crämer with the house of Lord Lovelace in Devonshire, England, who had been seeking a German-trained tutor for his children. But the atmosphere of the household was entirely different from that of the Einsiedel's. Lady Lovelace, the only child of Lord Byron, was a serious student of philosophy and theology. Unfortunately, her reading had led to a denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, and to acceptance of a functional Unitarianism. Her seriousness on the matter had helped to convince her husband of the reasonableness of this position. Now they pressured Crämer to adopt this perspective too. Crämer refused. And his stay with the Lovelace's ended.[10]

Crämer intended to return to Germany as soon as possible. However, he had a letter of introduction to Sir Henry Drummond, a prominent member of the House of Commons. In the interim, Crämer decided to visit Drummond in Albury Park castle, near London.[11] Drummond was also distinguished by his peculiar religious views. He was a member of the Irvingite sect. Edward Irving had been excommunicated by the London Presbytery in 1830 for his tract on *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*, in which he asserted that

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[9]Lochner, "Craemer," 2.

[10]"Prof. W. Craemer," *Lutheran Witness* (May 21, 1891).

[11]Polack, "Craemer," 706.

Christ's human nature was sinful.[12] In that same year a number of his followers claimed to have received apostolic gifts, such as speaking in tongues, the gift of prophecy, and divine healing. On July 14, 1835, twelve men who claimed to have been appointed as apostles were commissioned to inaugurate the real apostolic mission to the gentiles. Among these "apostles" was Henry Drummond.[13]

Drummond pressed Crämer to join their group. Crämer again resisted. Still, Drummond believed that, should Crämer remain in the sphere of his influence, perhaps Crämer could be turned. Drummond steered Crämer toward Oxford and suggested that he establish himself first as a private instructor of German. Later he should apply for the soon to be established chair of modern literature. And so, in 1843, Crämer came to Oxford; it seemed that he might realize his dream of gaining a significant position there.

Oxford in 1843, however, was in the midst of an upheaval. Beginning in 1833 John Henry Newman had begun to issue *Tracts for the Times* in which he and his fellow "Tractarians" (as they came to be called), Edward Pusey and John Keble, sought to reinterpret the place of the Anglican church in relation to Roman Catholicism and the Reformation. Only two years prior to Crämer's arrival Newman had issued "Tract 90" – "Remarks

[12](London: Baldwin and Cradock,1830).

[13]One may see Edward Miller, *The History and Doctrines of Irvingism*, 2 volumes (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1878); P. E. Shaw, *The Catholic Apostolic Church* (Morningside Heights: King's Crown Press, 1946); The Irvingites introduced certain romanizing trends into the cultus (elaborate vestments), in doctrine (the Lord's Supper a sacrifice, transubstantiation), and in church polity (a hierarchy). Later this sect took the title the Catholic Apostolic Church. In America, the Irvingite liturgy heavily influenced the German Reformed Church and the liturgical work of Philip Schaff, John Nevin, and Henry Harbaugh. One may see Jack Martin Maxwell, *Worship and Reformed Theology: The Liturgical Lessons of Mercersburg*, Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series number 10 (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1976), 201-206; 435-466. *Der Lutheraner* (December 1897) noted the passing of the last Irvingite "apostle," and provided a brief, helpful synopsis of Irvingite belief.

on Certain Passages in the Thirty-Nine Articles." In a nutshell, the "Tractarians," or the Oxford Movement as it later came to be called, sought to redefine the Anglican communion by, among other things, reintroducing high liturgical worship, apostolic succession, and a friendlier attitude toward Rome.[14] Specifically in "Tract 90," Newman reinterpreted the understanding of the *via media* of Anglicanism. Where earlier interpreters saw the Church of England as the middle way between the Lutheran and Reformed branches of the Reformation, now the Oxford Movement sought to define Anglicanism as the middle way, in line with the patristic tradition, between (then) modern Roman Catholicism and the Reformation. However, to many it seemed that Newman reinterpreted the Thirty-nine Articles in a manner more congruent with the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent than with traditional Protestantism. Suspicions of "romanizing tendencies" were only confirmed when John Henry Newman resigned his position in the Church of England (September 18, 1843) for Roman Catholicism, into which he was received on October 9, 1845.[15]

Obviously, Crämer was in the thick of the controversy. He was pressured to deny Lutheranism, oppose the Reformation, and turn to the Church of England—his future at the university depended on it. Crämer resisted yet again, arguing that Confessional Lutheranism was the proper expression of orthodox Christianity. He was especially vexed by the disparaging way the Tractarians spoke of Luther's reforms.[16]

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[14]Peter B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760-1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Paul Vaiss, *From Oxford to the People: Reconsidering Newman and the Oxford Movement* (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1996); S. L. Ollard, *A Short History of the Oxford Movement* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co.; Milwaukee: The Morehouse Publishing Co., 1933).

[15]Avery Dulles, "Newman: The Anatomy of a Conversion," in *Newman and Conversion*, edited by Ian Ker (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 21-36.

[16]Interestingly, it appears that Crämer did not disparage the liturgical practices of the Oxford Movement (his liturgical practice seems to have mirrored that of Friedrich Lochner). His main criticism was reserved for its departure from the principle of salvation by grace through faith.

Not surprisingly, the planned professorship did not materialize. Crämer was again left without a definite course.

While he was still defending the Lutheran confession at Oxford, two matters came together to turn Crämer on a new path. First, he learned of a recent book that described the spiritual destitution of the Lutheran Church in the United States. A friend publicized Friedrich Wyneken's *The Distress of the German Lutherans in North America*, and Crämer's attention was fastened on the need for faithful, confessional Lutheran pastors in the United States.[17] Second, his brother told him of the work of Pastor Wilhelm Löhe in helping meet these needs. Löhe had sent the first graduates of his training school, Adam Ernst and J. G. Burger, to the United States in 1842, but more men were needed. What Löhe needed above all was a capable and energetic man to act as a leader for his *sendlinge* in the United States. Prof. Carl von Raumer and others encouraged Crämer to offer his services, and, in the fall of 1844, he made his way to Löhe at Neuendettelsau.[18]

Löhe was interested in doing mission work among native Americans. His plan was to establish Lutheran colonies among the various tribes and have the pastor of the congregation branch out into the Indian country. When Löhe met Crämer, he believed that he had found the ideal man for the work of leading this endeavor. Now all he needed was colonists. The call went out for laymen willing to tear up their roots in Germany and leave for the forests of America. Most of those who responded came from Löhe's own charge. Lochner described them as follows:

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[17]Friedrich Wyneken, *Die Noth der deutschen Lutheraner in Nord Amerika* (Pittsburgh; Druckerei der luterischen Kirchenzeitung, 1844); *The Distress of the German Lutherans in North America*, translated by S. Edgar Schmidt and edited by R. F. Rehmer (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Concordia Theological Seminary, 1986).

[18]Two weeks later Friedrich Lochner would arrive, and the two would become fast friends for the remainder of their lives. "Friedrich Johann Carl Lochner: An Autobiography," translated by William Lochner, *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 6 (January 1934): 110-111.

> There were simple Christian citizens from middle Franconia, partly from the region of Fürth and Nürnberg, partly from Altmühlgrund, mostly spiritual children of Löhe. No manner of physical need aroused in them the decision to emigrate; for at home they had sufficient, sometimes an abundant existence, and just as little were they moved by the desire to increase their possessions.[19]

Because not all of the volunteers could leave immediately (the group from Altmühlgrund had difficulty in liquidating their possessions), a small group was organized to blaze the trail. During the fall of 1844 and the winter of 1845 this group met to discuss the business of emigration. Central to their considerations was the calling of Crämer as their pastor, which they did on February 15, 1845. They subscribed to a document called, "General Instructions for Our Friends in America." A significant part of their life together would be formed by their common faith, the basis of which they outlined as follows:

> They subscribe to all the parts of the Lutheran Book of Concord, without any coercion, of their own free will, and without mental reservation. They confess that according to the extent of their knowledge they find the pure doctrine of the Word of God in the Book of Concord, that they have found nothing, either great or small, that is a contradiction to the Word of the Lord. In case it should happen—may God prevent it—that they should at some time be of a different conviction, they are to exert all efforts to get onto the foundation of the truth again. If they cannot reestablish agreement between their own opinion and the Book of Concord, after they have attempted it unsuccessfully, they are to leave the ministry of the Lutheran Church. In this case also they are not to retain any teaching position.[20]

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[19]Lochner, "Craemer," 3. "General Instructions for Our Friends in America," were handwritten documents prepared by Löhe for his colonists. For another example, one may see Carl S. Meyer, editor, *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 98-101.

[20]Lochner, "Craemer," 3-4.

An amazing thing was happening. Crämer the pedagogue was becoming Crämer the pastor! But before he could go to America, he had some business to attend to. First, the little company, comprised of one married couple and their child, four engaged couples, and two single men, needed financial assistance. Crämer, along with Lochner, visited Dr. Petri and Carl von Maltzan, who had promised to support two Löhe missionaries, and they received that support. Second, Crämer needed to be ordained. Baron von Maltzen petitioned Grand Duke Friedrich Franz II for permission for Crämer's ordination, and he gave it. On April 4, 1845, Crämer was ordained in the "Dom zu Schwerin" by Dr. Theodor Kliefoth.[21]

After some further travels, Crämer was installed as pastor of the colonists on April 19, 1845 as they prepared to leave for America. They sailed the following day on the ship *Caroline* from the port of Bremen. As far as ocean travel goes in the nineteenth century, this was a fairly typical trip. The crossing took fifty-one days, the colonists arriving in New York on June 8. The trip had been an eventful one. They had to sail around Scotland due to contrary winds. They ran into several severe storms, dodged iceburgs, and even collided with another ship one night. But there was good to report as well. There were four marriages on the day that the voyage began. But surely the highlight of the voyage for Crämer was meeting his future wife.

Dorothea Benthien from Achim near Bremen, then twenty-seven years old, was among a group of Lutherans who were destined for Fort Wayne, Indiana. She came to the attention of the Franconians when, during an outbreak of fever on the ship, she cared selflessly for the sick. It was suggested to Pastor Crämer that she would make a good wife. But he determined to put her to the test first. He challenged her as to whether she would be willing to join the colonists as a missionary helper to the Indians. When she replied unequivocally, Crämer decided on the spot that she was the woman for him. They were married

[21]Graebner, *Church Bells*, 33. His ordination text was Isaiah 58:7-14. His ordination certificate is in the collection of Concordia Historical Institute, Saint Louis.

on June 10, 1845 in Saint Matthew Church, New York City.[22] But the adventure was not yet over for the little band. From New York City they moved up the Hudson Valley to Albany, and then west to Buffalo by train. On the westward journey, their train collided head on with another. The immigrants were spared, having taken seats in the last car.[23]

Löhe had instructed Crämer to affiliate with the Michigan Synod, and so the congregation made its way to Monroe, Michigan. From there they moved on to Ann Arbor, Detroit, and finally, by boat, arrived in Saginaw about July 10.[24] There the women stayed while Pastor and the men moved inland, up the Cass River, to clear the land for their colony, Frankenmuth. Over the next several months they built a log house, which served as both a parsonage and as a church. On Christmas day 1845, the service was held in it. They used a desk for a pulpit and a large box for an altar. Initially Crämer held daily matins and vespers services, but as the congregation grew and the demands of the mission work pulled him away for significant time, this was changed to a single midweek service. However, Crämer was careful to observe all the significant festivals of the church year, Saint John's day, Purification, Annunciation, and Visitation of Mary, Saint Michael's Day, Epiphany and Ascension were all observed on week days.[25]

Crämer turned to the missionary work quickly, too. Shortly after his arrival he began to make contacts with the natives, and engaged an interpreter to help in the work. In the spring of 1846

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[22]James Ware, "Dorothea Benthien Craemer," *Lutheran Witness* (August 1988):5. A copy of the marriage certificate is in the collection of Concordia Historical Institute, Saint Louis.

[23]There is some confusion in the sources about where the accident occurred. Poluck claims it was outside of Buffalo ("Craemer," 207, note 12), but Lochner states that it was "a mile out of Albany" ("Craemer," 5).

[24]Graebner, *Church Bells*, 35-39.

[25]A description of the Michigan colonies is available as *Etwas über die deutsch-lutherischen Niederlansungen in der Grasschaft Saginaw, Staat Michigan* (Erlangen: Gedruck bei Paul Adolph Junge & Sohn, 1849); One may also see "Something about the German Lutheran Colonies in Saginaw County, Mich.," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 4 (April 1931): 16-20.

he visited the Indian village on the Cass River twenty miles from Frankenmuth. His method was simple. Preach and teach the word.[26] Remembering clearly his own experience, he spoke of human sin and God's grace. As time went on he settled into the pattern of visiting three of the villages once a month. Normally he was forced to travel on foot sometimes as far as seventy miles one way.

Methodist missionaries (*schwärmenden Methodisten*) also visited these Indian settlements. They maligned Crämer and his preaching, and held revivals instead, trying to convert Indians. They also spread the rumor that any native who was baptized a Lutheran would be sent into slavery in England! Crämer's method of combat was to open his home to the Indian children and encourage them to be present at the mission school were he taught them the Lutheran Confession.[27] By Pentecost 1846 there were just over thirty native children in school. As many young Indians as that were in the Crämer's home, Mrs. Crämer tending to their needs. Her care for the children earned her the nickname that later seminarians would also ascribe to her, "Mother."[28]

By Pentecost 1846 the colony had grown in its German representation as well. Ten couples from Bremen, nine other families, and several single individuals added to the population.

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[26]Crämer also translated Luther's Small Catechism into the Chippewa language. One may see Ralph Owen, "The Old Lutherans Come," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 20 (April 1947): 33; Polack, "Craemer," 708.

[27]Crämer writes: ("Frankenmut, am Flusse Cass, Michigan," *Der Lutheraner* [February 23, 1847]): "hier gebiert die Kirche Kinder aus fremdem Zungen, nich durch die Mittel menschlicher Treiberei, wie die Secten Christen machen wollen, sondern durch die einzeigen Gnadenmittel des Worts und Sacraments." One may also see Walter P. Schoenfuhs, "Eduard Raimund Baierlein: Lutheran Missionary to the Indians in America and Asia," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 27 (October 1954): 137.

[28]Walter P. Schoenfuhs, "'O Tebeningeion'—'O Dearest Jesus,'" *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 37 (October 1964): 98-103; P. E. Kretzmann, "Documents Pertaining to the Lutheran Missions among the Indians in Michigan, 1844-1869," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 2 (January 1930): 100-102.

A significant community was developing. More land was cleared and a new church was built, dedicated on Christmas day, 1846. In that service three Indians were baptized, a boy of eighteen (Abraham), along with his sisters, Magdelena and Anna.[29] Over the course of time Crämer would baptize thirty-one Indian children.

But things were not going as well with the Michigan Synod. Löhe had been assured that the synod was thoroughly orthodox.[30] The synod, however, had accepted a man from the Basel Mission school, named Dumser, whose ordination vow included no reference to the Confessions. It was also discovered that there were congregations in the synod that were mixed—German Reformed and Lutheran. At the meeting of the Michigan Synod in 1846, Crämer demanded that Dumser be disciplined and the mixed congregations be corrected. The synod took no action. On June 25, 1846, Crämer and his colleagues tendered their resignations to the synod. In August of that same year, Crämer set out for Fort Wayne, where a preliminary meeting to discuss a constitution for a new synod was being held. On April 26, 1847, that synod would be formed as *die Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Synode von Missouri, Ohio, und Andern Staaten* – the Missouri Synod. Crämer was there from the beginning.

Seminary Professor and President

We now enter the third phase of Crämer's life. He served the Frankenmuth community and its congregation, Saint Lorenz, until 1850, when the Missouri Synod called him to a new field of labor, the "practical seminary" at Fort Wayne. He would serve the seminary from 1850 until his death in 1891.

On October 2, 1850 the synod met at Saint Louis. One agenda item was the election of a new professor for the Fort Wayne

[29]*Der Lutheraner*, February 23, 1847; Schoenfuhs, "Baierlein," 146.

[30]Schoenfuhs, "Baierlein," 139; Roy Suelflow, "The Planting of Lutheranism in Detroit," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 39 (July 1966): 79.

seminary, since Professor Wolter had died of cholera in 1849. Professor Biewend had taken over temporarily, but then had been called to Saint Louis. The gap remained, and Crämer was the unanimous choice. Crämer was considered indispensable to the congregation at Frankenmuth, which sent a delegate to the synod to plead that they not call away their pastor. In the middle of November 1850, Crämer prepared for the move. He delivered his farewell sermon and arrived in Fort Wayne on November 24, 1850.

Upon his arrival Crämer found twenty students under his charge. He was determined to succeed in producing disciplined, thoughtful, and thoroughly Lutheran pastors. He worked with the president of the seminary, Wilhelm Sihler.[31] Sihler taught pastoral theology, Old and New Testament, symbolics, and catechetics. Crämer taught the remainder (though there was obviously overlap). They worked well together for the eleven years the seminary remained in Fort Wayne after Crämer's arrival. But there was a difference in temperament between the two. Crämer believed that as long as a man had the earnest desire to serve, he could be adequately prepared for the office, even though his intellectual gifts might not be particularly strong. Sihler, on the other hand, preferred not to admit marginal students, stressing the need for a learned clergy. Crämer, though, was no push over. He demanded discipline and was very strict with the students. He, however, argued that for one who would occupy the Holy Office, it was most necessary that they be sufficiently disciplined in life for the demands that would be placed upon them. In this we see Crämer's personality come to the fore very clearly.

In 1857, because the student body had grown so significantly, the seminary erected a new building. Sihler collected $3000 from Saint Paul congregation in Fort Wayne, and Crämer collected $4000 from the other local congregations. In October of the same

[31]Lewis Spitz Jr., *Life in Two Worlds: A Biography of Wiliam Sihler* (Saint Louis and London: Concordia Publishing House, 1968)

year the new Teachers' Seminary, which had been founded in Milwaukee, was moved to Fort Wayne.

These were minor changes compared to what was to come. In 1861 the synod resolved to move the seminary department from Fort Wayne to Saint Louis (and the academy in Saint Louis to Fort Wayne). Synod believed that ample room existed in the buildings of the Saint Louis seminary for both the practical and the theoretical departments. Crämer received a call to Saint Louis, and accepted it. There he worked with C .F. W. Walther. Together they taught church history, symbolics, pastoral theology, homiletics, and catechetics to the combined classes of the two seminaries, and the other courses Walther and Crämer taught in their respective institutions. They *were* the faculty until 1863 when C. A. Brauer arrived.[32]

Crämer continued to be active in the pastoral ministry and missionary activity. In Fort Wayne he served a congregation in the Cedar Creek area. In Saint Louis he helped organize a congregation out of Irish and German immigrants in the section of town called "Minerstown." Since his salary was paid by synod, Crämer refused any remuneration.[33] But, again, his faithful work was rewarded. After twenty-five years, the congregation numbered 335 communicants and eighty-six voting members.

In 1874 the synod again met with seminary matters on its collective mind. This time it had to decide what to do about the overcrowding in Saint Louis. The squeeze demanded either a new building or a separation of the two departments. It so

[32]At this time Crämer, always looking for a new learning experience, began to study Norwegian. A number of Norwegian students matriculated at the seminary, and Crämer determined to instruct them in their own language. One may see C. S. Meyer, "Intersynodical Unity Fostered through Co-operation in Education (1859-1874)," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 29 (Summer 1956): 56.

[33]For an example of his preaching, one may see A. Crämer, *Zwei Predigten, bei seinem Abschied und bei der Einführung seines Nachfolgers zu Minerstown, Mo.* (Saint Louis: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten, 1877).

happened that the Pennsylvania Ministerium had come into possession of property in Springfield, Illinois, which had formerly been the Illinois State University. But the transfer documents contained a clause to the effect that the buildings be used only for educational purposes. The Pennsylvania Synod could not fulfill this stipulation, and so they offered it to the Missouri Synod for $6000. Pastor Bünger and several other Saint Louis pastors investigated the property and convinced Trinity Congregation to purchase it. They hoped to open a female seminary there. That project fell through, but the down payment had been made, and conditions in Saint Louis were not improving. Therefore the practical department was moved to Springfield.[34]

Crämer advised against moving the whole practical department to Springfield. Other options seemed more attractive, including Lochner's suggestion that the seminary relocate to Milwaukee. But that also failed to materialize. Synod resolved that by September 1, 1875, the seminary should have been moved to Springfield. Even though age was creeping up on him, the synod called Crämer, arguing that he alone could handle the challenge of moving the seminary yet again. Still, synod did resolve that another professor be called (and Henry Wyneken later filled the position). Toward the end of August, Crämer moved to Springfield. It would be his last move. At that time there were twenty-seven students in the "proseminar," 114 students in all, of which eighty-one were Missouri Synod, four Wisconsin Synod, three Illinois Synod, and twenty-one Norwegian Synod.

Crämer brought his usual vigor to the new situation. He taught dogmatics according to Conrad Dietrich, symbolics according to Guericke, and pastoral theology according to Walther.[35] Besides that he taught homiletics, with a study of

[34]Erich Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophets: The Anatomy of a Seminary 1846-1976* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 65-88.

[35]For the a comparison of the curricula of Saint Louis and what later became Springfield, one may see *Katalog der Professoren und Studenten des deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Prediger-Seminars (Concorida-College) zu St.*

Luther's *Kirchepostille,* and the Apology and Formula of Concord in Latin. Crämer always prepared joyfully and carefully for his classes. What seemed to frustrate him more than anything was inactivity. During the summer he would select some of the students for an accelerated course, enabling them to complete their training and enter the parish sooner. His students would later recount how it was almost impossible not to learn from Crämer. He was an excellent teacher. But he also knew how to build character in his students. His word was law.[36] Yet, the older Crämer grew, the more mild and fatherly he became in his dealing with his students. Crämer was not in favor of lightly incurring debts. Many a time he would help out needy students from his own pocket.

The times in Springfield were difficult for the Crämers. Up to 1881 only one death occurred in the family, the death of a young daughter in Frankenmuth. But in 1881, inside of two months, three of his grown children and two grandchildren died. Crämer bore the shock as best he could, but Mrs. Crämer was devastated. First, the only daughter of the family, Maria, died with her two children. Then the second youngest son, Friedrich, died on September 19. The eldest son Heinrich passed away. All of this was too much for Mrs. Crämer, and she started to decline. She passed away on November 11, 1884, aged sixty-seven. Crämer himself found his dear wife kneeling at her bedside.[37]

Louis, Mo., für das Studienjahr 1873-74 (Saint Louis: Druckerei der Synode von Missrouri, Ohio, u. a. St., 1874), 9.

[36]J. F. Boerger later recounted the circumstances surrounding his engagement and marriage, which involved Crämer ("Autobiography of Pastor J. F. Boerger, Sr.," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 30 [Spring 1957]: 34): "During my vicarage year (1888-1889) at Fall Creek, Wisconsin, I learned to know my future wife, Theodora Clara Friedrich, who was then a sweet sixteen. We fell in love about Christmas 1888 and had a secret agreement when I left August 7, 1889. Professor Crämer . . . used to say to the vicars: "Ihr könnt euch ja umsehen, aber Briefwechsel ist strengstens verboten" ("You may look around, but all correspondence is strictly forbidden"). So I lived up to that rule and never wrote a line to Theodora while I was a student at Springfield, nor did I receive a letter from her."

[37]*Lebenslauf der Frau Professoren Craemer,* in the collection of *Concordia*

Tragedy continued to test Crämer. In 1888 a typhoid epidemic broke out at the seminary. On April 23 the seminary was forced to close doors because of the epidemic. Several students died at the seminary; several who had left and gone home also died of the disease. Crämer would not be stopped. In the midst of the epidemic, he went around from bed to bed on visits. On July 30 the surviving seminarians were able finally to meet for their final exams. In the Spring of 1889 the epidemic broke out again. Seventeen seminarians contracted the disease. All but two recovered.

Crämer's strength was now starting to ebb. But several projects remained that he was determined to see through to guarantee the future of the Seminary. First, in 1890 he helped convince the synod to build a new building at Springfield. Second, with his encouragement they called a second theological professor. Reinhold Pieper of Manitowac, Wisconsin, brother of Franz Pieper, accepted the call extended to him. He arrived in Springfield with his family on April 2, 1891.[38] Crämer, despite ill health and rainy weather, insisted on meeting Pieper at the train depot. His condition deteriorated steadily over the month of April. Yet, he maintained his regular weekly duties. The weekend found him at the baptismal font, serving in place of an an ill brother pastor. He gave his lectures on the following Monday and Tuesday, and then delivered the installation sermon for Reinhold Pieper on Wednesday. This proved to be too much. Towards the end of the service he collapsed. As his strength gradually waned, Crämer refused to be cowed by his illness. On hearing the class bell, several times he dressed in order to lecture.[39] He insisted on being allowed to preach. These activities being disallowed, he queried the students who were serving him with probing doctrinal questions, and demanded

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Historical Institute, recounts: "But the heavy burden of her cross became almost too great to bear; . . . in the short period of two months, three grown children, among whom were her only dearly-beloved daughter and two grandchildren, died in rapid succession."

[38]Heintzen, *Prarie School*, 96-97.

[39]Luecke notes ("Brief Sketch") that Crämer "often expressed the wish of dying 'in the harness.'"

immediate, clear answers. Finally, on Sunday morning, May 3, he passed away, and God gathered his faithful servant to himself at age seventy-eight.

On Tuesday, May 5, a brief service was held at his house. He was buried May 7th, Ascension Day. Professors Pieper, Stoeckhardt, and Graebner of the Saint Louis seminary attended, as did District Presidents and representatives from Fort Wayne, Milwaukee, and Addison (now River Forest). Reinhold Pieper preached the sermon on Revelation 2:10. It was a large procession, with more than seventy pastors present, 300 students from Saint Louis and Springfield, the total number of participants being estimated at 2000. Excluding Lincoln's funeral, this was the largest funeral procession up to that time in Springfield. He was buried in Oak Ridge cemetery.[40]

On May 31, just three and a half weeks after his funeral, the new building was dedicated at Springfield. Crämer's seminary, better yet, Christ's seminary, would survive.

Assessment

The breadth of Crämer's experience, the determination that he brought to any project he undertook, but above all, his dedication to the gospel set August Crämer apart as a faithful servant in Christ's church. Several things stand out as we consider the big picture of Crämer's life. First, He put himself fully into any work that he started, seeking excellence, and, most of the time, realizing great success. On his desk in his office he is said to have had the following Bible verse: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently" (Jeremiah 48:10).

He was dedicated to sharing the message of justification by grace with sinners who were separated from Christ. And yet, as he did so, he never compromised on the full confession of the gospel. Doctrinal concession was not a possibility he would consider. He never gave up his mission work. Even when he

[40]"Rev. Prof. Craemer," *Lutheran Witness* (May 21, 1891).

was saddled with the responsibilities of his professorship, he made every possible effort to continue to feed hungry souls with word and sacrament. In Fort Wayne, Saint Louis, and Springfield, he offered himself in any way to serve the church. As a professor he influenced a generation of pastors. He is reported to have given, at times, twenty-three lectures per week. But the effort was well rewarded. In Fort Wayne (1850-1861) he prepared eighty candidates for the ministry; in Saint Louis (1861-1875), 225. Finally, in Springfield (1874-1891), 330 candidates for the ministry received the bulk of their training from him—635 total.

In short, Crämer firmly believed that Christ had spent Himself for him. Now he would spend his life for Christ by spending it for others. The Missouri Synod and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne would be much different and much lesser institutions were it not for August Crämer. At the very least his life provides an interesting picture of nineteenth-century church work. But I believe there is more to be said than that of him. Crämer's life and work offers us an archetype, a model of faithful service in Christ's church.

A bronze tablet featuring a profile of August Crämer that formerly graced Crämer Hall in Springfield now rests in Concordia Theological Seminary's archives. We would do well to find a way to display it, for its inscription captures perfectly what we as a seminary hope to achieve in the work entrusted to us by our synod— the formation of confessional pastors with a passion for missions.

> Crämer Hall, dedicated in the memory of August Crämer, May 26, 1812—May 3, 1891. Lutheran scholar, pioneer missionary among the Indians, pastor, professor and president of this institution for 41 years—a man of God, who by his rugged faith, his burning zeal in the performance of his duties, his labor and his self-denial gave evidence of the love of Christ that was in him, and whom we greatly honor as the father of the Seminary.

A Review Article

***Law and Gospel: Philip Melanchthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over* "Poenitentia." By Timothy J. Wengert. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997. 232 pages. Paper.**

Lowell C. Green

This volume is about law and gospel and the doctrine of justification in the teachings of Luther, Melanchthon, and their followers. More particularly, it is devoted to the first controversy over the function of the law in Lutheran theology (antinomianism). Thereby, the author presents important insights into the theology of Philip Melanchthon, Johann Agricola of Eisleben, and Caspar Aquila of Saalfeld. We will examine historical and doctrinal aspects, noting that, on the whole, the author handles the former more successfully than the latter.

Wengert explains the concept of *poenitentia* in the introduction, with special attention to Luther's usage, beginning with the ninety-five theses on indulgences. He points out that *poenitentia* has many shadings of meaning (it can be translated either as repentance, penitence, or penance) and he therefore elects to maintain the original Latin term, as in the title of the book; this term can then be interpreted within the varying context of a given writer, time, or statement.

The author shows how Melanchthon took over and adapted the medieval three-fold perception of *poenitentia* (contrition, confession, and satisfaction) and adapted it to his own theology. In Melanchthon's revised form, the law, with its threats of divine wrath, frightened the sinner and led him to "repentance," that is, the conviction that he had sinned (contrition). This, in turn, led him to acknowledge his sin before God (confession), and brought him forgiveness through the atoning work of Christ (satisfaction by Christ). The doing of penance for satisfaction by the sinner was thereby replaced by the satisfaction accomplished by Christ.

Agricola rejected the use of the law and located *poenitentia* under the gospel instead. "... *Poenitentia* is a mark of the new creature, not of the old. . . . 'an appellation for the new creature, which is being

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renewed daily'. . ." He thought that it was the gospel, not the law, that moved one to see his sin and to seek forgiveness from Christ. In his sermons on Colossians, Agricola criticized "philosophy," doubtless an oblique rebuke at Melanchthon: "Philosophy says, 'When you sin, you are condemned; be afraid!' God's word says, 'When you sin, be happy. It is to have no consequence. Sin does not condemn you; good works do not save you, but rather faith in Jesus Christ alone.' For this reason, then, there is in the congregation forgiveness of sins without ceasing" (Wengert, 35).

In the first chapter, Wengert presents an admirable review of Agricola's biblical exegesis from 1525-1527. His later controversy with Melanchthon lay implicit in these early works, but the debate did not occur until later. In Chapter 2, Wengert presents a masterful summary of Lutheran catechetical literature during the same period of time. This presentation is built upon the research and published texts of Ferdinand Cohrs. However, through his use of early imprints at Wolfenbüttel, Wengert adds much to previous research. He traces the development from Luther's early treatises on the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. These early catechisms sometimes included the ABCs, the Ave Maria, and daily prayers. Wengert seems perplexed that the line between pedagogy and devotional literature was fluid in early catechisms. However, their writers wanted to edify while teaching, and it should not be forgotten that Luther himself spoke of praying the catechism, which he regarded as devotional in character. In his present book, Wengert skirts the difficult issue of filial versus servile fear in the Decalogue without giving any real solution (Wengert, 120-121).[1]

[1]At least, he does not repeat his insolent mockery of Johann Michael Reu from 1995 (Timothy Wengert, "'Fear and Love' in the Ten Commandments," *Concordia Journal* 21 [January 1995]: 14-15). There, Wengert describes Reu's contention that the First Commandment calls for a filial fear rather than a servile fear as "late twentieth-century feelings about the *mysterium tremendum* that make God the perfect tourist attraction: awe-inspiring and cuddly" (15). Wengert appeals there to the authority of Charles Arand, who based his case on Johannes Meyer and Albrecht Peters, all of whom insist that the First Commandment must be interpreted on the basis of the "Conclusion": "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children . . ." Luther's classic explanation of the First Commandment, "We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things," is most profound and, as all other law-gospel distinctions, is very difficult to expound properly. It is tragic that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

There was a kinship between Agricola's view of repentance and the position of later eighteenth-century Pietism, which often insisted that one had to be sorry for one's sin in order to qualify for forgiveness. Wengert finds this kind of legalism in Agricola, who taught that being "sorry for sin" was a requirement for forgiveness (Wengert, 74). The observant reader will quickly note that thereby one's salvation depended in part upon some quality within the individual (remorse), and was thereby diverted from the divine word of gospel. This illustrates the general truth that when one thinks to remove the law, the gospel inevitably becomes a new law, and thus becomes an adulterated gospel.

In Chapter 3, Wengert points out that since law and gospel underlay Melanchthon's doctrine of justification, it was inevitable that he would be forced to counter the antinomianism of Agricola (Wengert, 77). He finds the debate foreshadowed both in their differentiated catechetical literature and in their disparate interpretations of Colossians.

Because Agricola had been strongly opposed to Melanchthon's "Articles for the Saxon Visitation," two meetings were held at Castle Torgau to discuss the Visitation Articles and to attempt to iron out their differences. The first was held on September 26, 1527; only the visitors (Schurff, Melanchthon, and Asmus von Haubitz) were present. The Visitation Articles were discussed, but Melanchthon's report to Justus Jonas shortly thereafter did not mention Agricola or Aquila (Wengert, 110). Melanchthon apparently was unaware of the tempest that was brewing with his old friend until a few weeks later, when Agricola published his attack upon an unauthorized Latin translation of the Visitation Articles. Whereas Joachim Rogge and Gustav Kawerau thought that Agricola's attack was a lost document, Wengert identifies this assault with Agricola's "130 Fragestücke" of November 1527 (Wengert, 116; one may also see 126).

Agricola gave a succinct statement of his position in the "130 Questions" as follows: "Christians do out of love and desire

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seminaries do not have well-developed departments of Catechetics and that these issues have hardly been discussed in America, except for Reu's *Catechetics* and a few other books. Reu's position is entitled to a more respectful hearing and a more adequate answer than that given in the above-mentioned article.

everything God demands of them. For they are sealed with the spontaneous Spirit of Christ. Therefore no law ought to force them, for no law is given to the righteous (1 Timothy 1:9). Moreover, as soon as the gospel becomes a matter of compulsion and a rule, then it is no longer the gospel" (Wengert, 129).

In this confounding of law and gospel, one is reminded of the "gospel-reductionism" of some recent antinomians in America who insisted that not the law but only the gospel informs the Christian what he should do. When the law is thus rejected and replaced by the gospel, the resultant gospel is no longer the gospel.

A second Torgau meeting was held in late November 1527; this time, Agricola was present, as well as Melanchthon, Luther, Bugenhagen, and Caspar Güttel (Wengert, 131). Wengert dates the meeting November 26-28. He maintains that Melanchthon was defending himself from a charge by Agricola that he had wrongly based repentance upon fear of God's wrath rather than upon fear of God. Wengert counters this with Luther's criticism of Agricola's position: "How the fear of punishment and fear of God differ is said more easily with syllables and letters than is known in reality and feeling" (*WA* 4:272,16-17; Wengert, 117). Wengert concludes: "Of course, Luther, more quickly than either Melanchthon or Agricola, discerned the paradox of the person living under fear of punishment and fear of God at the same time" (Wengert, 120). Here is a very fine observation by Wengert; he has in mind Luther's concept of the justified believer as *simul justus ac peccator.*

The reader might be disappointed because this book does not give more generous quotations from the men meeting at Castle Torgau in November 1527. At that time there was general support for Melanchthon's position, with warnings to Agricola regarding his stand against the law. However, Agricola did not try to reconcile himself with Melanchthon, much to the latter's disappointment (Wengert, 132-133). Luther advanced a compromise formula in which he attempted to mediate between the positions of Melanchthon and Agricola (134). Wengert summarizes:

> Luther's solution was a marvelous example of theological diplomacy. First, he continued to insist that the controversy was a war of words and could thus be solved with definitions. Then, he refused to accept any of Agricola's substantive argumentation and asserted that the Christian life moved from

> law to gospel or, in this case, from *poenitentia* to faith. The notion of a faith prior to justification was put in terms of the creative order and law and not, as Agricola stated in his latest catechisms, in terms of the proclamation of the satisfaction and forgiveness of Christ. Finally, Luther did not paper over the differences (Wengert, 134-135).

Agricola continued to press his case, so that, a decade later, the full-blown "Antinomian Controvery" broke out. At that time, Luther was to come out much more strongly against Agricola, who was condemned for his teaching and who consequently left Saxony and went to Brandenburg.

Unfortunately, Wengert's handling of doctrinal issues is not up to the level of his historical treatment. As Wengert makes his way through the dogmatic distinctions of forensic justification, he is not always convincing. He is caught up in the controversy over Apology 4, going back into the nineteenth century, among Eichhorn, Loofs, and Stange, in which only Carl Stange affirmed the Confessional Lutheran position. Loofs had gone out from Apology 4:78: "Therefore we are justified by faith alone, understanding justification as to effect a just man out of an unjust one or to regenerate," and had claimed that here was an *effektiv* justification, that is, a justification based upon the intrinsic righteousness within the believer. But this was a wrong interpretation. What that statement in Apology 4:78 really says is that to be justified means to be made righteous; when one is forensically declared righteous in justification, one has become that which God has declared him to be, namely, a righteous one, or one in whom the new life of regeneration has taken place. Apology 4:78 is not the rejection of forensic justification but rather the recognition that justification has actually taken place and that the sinner has really become a new being in Christ. Therefore, the findings of Holl, Loofs, Scheible, and others, that justification is "analytic," that is, an ongoing process of sanctification, are at variance with Apology 4. However, Wengert finds a change in the 1532 Commentary on Romans where justification is defined in such a way that it "explicitly eliminated any internal change in the person." He claims that "the Apology lacked this clarity" (Wengert, 179-180). This reviewer thinks that Wengert is presenting a false alternative here.

In a final chapter, Wengert makes his presentation of Melanchthon's doctrine of justification and good works after 1533. He thinks that Melanchthon's teaching about forensic justification, by which the accusations of the law are overcome for the believing sinner, leaves no place for the law and good works. He writes that, to compensate for this inferred weakness, Melanchthon insisted that good works must necessarily follow a justifying faith; this was imperative both because of the antinomianism of Agricola and also in order to accomodate moderate Roman Catholics with whom Melanchthon had been in conversation (Wengert, 201-202).

Wengert supports his claim that forensic justification led Melanchthon to teach the necessity of works by means of two proofs in which this reviewer finds some weaknesses. First, Wengert cites the controversy of Cordatus with Cruciger and Melanchthon, 1536-1537. Cruciger had actually taught that contrition was a *causa sine qua non* of justification in the sense that faith could not co-exist without sorrow for one's sin. Cordatus had stretched this to say that Cruciger claimed that "good works" were the *causa sine qua non* of justification, an unwarranted and unfair distortion of the original statement. As a matter of fact, Luther supported Cruciger's statement with the argument that contrition was not the work of man but of God.[2] Wengert, however, cites Cordatus's distortion of Cruciger as evidence that Melanchthon said that good works were necessary for salvation, and sees this as the forerunner of the later Majoristic and synergistic controversies. The reviewer finds this a faulty conclusion. Second, Wengert also cites from the 1535 *Loci theologici* the interpretation of Romans 8:26: "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," a text that Melanchthon applies to the life of regenerate Christians: "In this example we see these causes joined together: the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the will, which is, of course, not indifferent, but fights against its infirmity" (CR 21:376). Wengert misquotes this when he writes: "This middle way led in the 1535 *Loci* to insistence that the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the human will are the three causes of salvation" (Wengert, 206). This is a seriously wrong interpretation of Melanchthon's words, which dealt not with the unregenerate but with the regenerate believer.[3]

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[2]One may see Köstlin and Kawerau, *Martin Luther: Sein Leben und seine Schriften* (Berlin, 1908), 2:445-448.

[3]One may see Lowell C. Green, "The Three Causes of Conversion in

Wengert's position may puzzle the reader. He cites Cordatus's distortion that Melanchthon taught that works are necessary for salvation, but then refutes this in a clear statement: "So he [Melanchthon] devised a way to speak of the necessity of works for the believer by excluding their necessity for justification" (Wengert, 188). Whence Wengert's perplexity over the place of good works under forensic justification? Actually there seems to be another cause. Wengert seems unaware that Scheible's theological acumen is not equal to his historical scholarship, and he seems overly influenced from Scheible's "analytic" view of justification (as it had been propounded by Karl Holl on the basis of lectures of the early Luther), that is, justification based upon intrinsic righteousness or the moral qualities of the believer. This position naturally led Holl to find powerful objections to forensic justification. Although Hans Emil Weber was a much deeper theologian than Holl or Scheible, he too worried that a "synthetic" form, in which justification was based upon the extrinsic or alien righteousness of Christ, would circumvent the need for good works in the life of the justified believer. Furthermore, Weber, recalling that sin for Luther consisted in idolatry, or placing false gods in the place which belonged to God (First Commandment), thought that justification had to make a change in the heart of the sinner, and warned lest the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the believer, that is, forensic justification, might bypass the change of heart which faith implied, and reduce justification to a juridical pronouncement quite apart from the believer's faith. These are unquestionably weighty problems.[4] Moved by such considerations, Wengert suggests that

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Philipp Melanchthon, Martin Chemnitz, David Chytraeus, and the 'Formula of Concord" (*Luther-Jahrbuch 1980*:89-114). This essay also shows that Melanchthon and his disciples did not hold the views of conversion of later Pietism but meant by "conversion" so much as "sanctification" in the life of the regenerate. When Melanchthon spoke of the "three causes," he did not mean in the conversion of the *nondum renati*, but in the life of the regenerate.

[4]On problems of forensic justification one may see Hans Emil Weber, *Reformation, Orthodoxie und Rationalismus* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1937; reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, n.d.) 1/1:110-112, especially 110, note 10. However, Weber himself wrote previously that in Melanchthon faith "is also valued as the rightful honor which a person presents to God in a real fulfillment of the First Commandment" (72-73). Thus, Melanchthon both taught forensic justification and safeguarded the character of faith as a genuine change within the believer.

Melanchthon shored up his system by urging the "necessity" of good works in the ongoing life of the justified believer, and, ultimately, by propounding the "third use of the law," that is, a function of the law in the life of the believing Christian. However, such a solution was not really needed. In regard to the problem discussed by Weber and Wengert, the solution was already developed by Melanchthon in Apology 4:78, namely, that to be pronounced righteous by the lips of God means to be made righteous.

Wengert offers several interesting explanations why Melanchthon proposed the "third use of the law." On page 205, he writes that Melanchthon was faced by two wrong solutions: the Roman Catholic way of justification, partly based on good works, and Agricola's way of antinomianism, which downplayed good works. Wengert says that if Melanchthon wanted to counter the accusations of the Roman Catholics that he had destroyed good works, then a third way was needed. "To inform the good conscience and encourage it to obedience, a third use of the law is necessry" (Wengert, 205). However, the observant reader might object that this was not the real solution. Since both Rome and Eisleben had confounded law and gospel, the right solution would have been to have followed Luther and to have distinguished law and gospel in the way that Melanchthon failed to do at this juncture.

Some readers will be frustrated when Wengert's book routinely refers to the edition of *Melanchthon's Briefwechsel* or MBW, edited by Scheible and others. Published in relatively small printings, sold only in the complete set and at an extremely high price, this edition is not found in most American libraries, and is now out of print and unavailable. Wengert has wisely provided cross references in some cases to two standard editions, the old *Corpus Reformatorum* and the *Melanchthons Werke,Studienausgabe,* SA or MSA, recently edited by Robert Stupperich. It is highly imperative that there be a reissue of the MBW at a more reasonable price, but until then, it will not be possible for the average scholar to compare Wengert's findings with the original sources. Nevertheless, MBW provides much-needed corrections and updatings to the CR and, where available, it should be consulted.

Theological Observer

On the Morning After

The tragic crash of an Egyptian airliner off the coast of Massachusetts on the morning of October 31, 1999 muted press coverage of the theological significance of the Reformation celebration in Augsburg, Germany. In the city where the chief Lutheran confession was presented on June 25, 1530, Lutheran and Roman Catholic leaders consummated an agreement in regard to justification to live and to let live. Monday evening I caught the tail end of a PBS analysis of events in Augsburg on the previous day. Featured were two university professors, one from Harvard and the other from Columbia. The German born Harvard professor saw the significance of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* in bringing to an end the political divisions in her native country, where, until the twentieth century, the right to participate in civil affairs and hold office was determined by religious allegiance. The Columbia professor stressed the religious significance of the *Joint Declaration* and claimed that Roman Catholics now accepted justification by faith. No public person ever suggests that Lutherans now accept salvation by works. It may be that these two scholars, along with most of the Christian population, do not really know what the Reformation principle of justification by faith means. This does not keep it from being revered as a principle.

On the morning after, November 1, Francis Cardinal Arinze was at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne to say Mass and preach in honor of All Saints' Day. He had been invited to the area by the theological faculty of the University of Notre Dame. Since Vatican II, Roman Catholic theological faculties have shifted away from traditional church teaching. In attempting to mend the widening rift between the diocesan bishops and the theological faculties, Pope John Paul II issued *Ex corde ecclesiae* calling for contact between the two groups. What made the visit of Cardinal Arinze significant is that this African born head of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue is on the short list to succeed into the chair of Saint Peter. A chance to see the next pope was good enough reason to head towards the flagship church of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

An early arrival assured seats in the cathedral but it also assured having to listen to a half-hour cacophony of Hail Marys. It may have already been going on for a half-hour before that, but it kept the congregation occupied. During the distribution of the Holy

Communion a mantra of one Psalm line, "taste and see," was sung over and over again for twenty minutes and had the same mesmerizing effect. Both lay readers were women, a practice that seems to have the status of tradition in that church. The Cardinal's sermon had a Luther-like twist to it. Laymen and women, single mothers and children, had an equal chance with priests in achieving the holiness required for sainthood. You serve God by fulfilling the obligation He has given you. Among the examples he provided were the children who saw the vision of Virgin Mary at Fatima, a medical doctor who refused to undergo an abortion to save her own life, and Thomas More, who did not acquiesce to the divorces of Henry VIII. The word "holiness" is the crux of the problem. It is the code word for sanctification and occupies the same central position in Roman Catholic theology as justification does in Lutheran theology. Of course holiness is at the center of any Arminian theology, which includes Wesley's followers. Strangely, Methodists and Roman Catholics are close on this point. Roman Catholics can accept the Lutheran formulation of justification *sola fide,* since this doctrine plays no significant role in their theology. Our sanctification or holiness counts, not Christ's. This became evident on the morning after Reformation Day 1999.

Both at the beginning and the end of the service His Eminence informed the gathered congregation that His Holiness would give those receiving the Holy Communion two weeks of indulgence. The man making this announcement was no lowly Tetzel hawking indulgences with a drum on the side of the river, but a church official who reputedly is the third most significant person in the Vatican hierarchy after the pope himself and who has a good chance to succeed him. Several times the diocesan bishop reminded the faithful that the Cardinal had come from the side of Saint Peter's successor and once called him "our father." A span of time two weeks out of purgatory is not all that great, considering one has to sit two hours in the cathedral. How does one calculate the value of two weeks, when one cannot know how long one's sentence in purgatory will be?

At this point I was overcome with the spirit of Luther. Who was the pope to have the right to forgive sins in Fort Wayne to people he did not even know and for sins he was not aware? Does his authority set a timetable after death for those present in that assembly? Roman Catholics have an admirable Communion practice. Just about everyone present goes. It was in connection with the Holy Communion that the most grievous insult and injury exists. The

Cardinal connected the two week reward of an indulgence with receiving Holy Communion with the implied intention that a papal indulgence gives something better than Holy Communion. Holy Communion forgives sins because it is Christ's body and blood sacrificed for sins. How can the pope's indulgence add anything to this? All this happened on the morning after October 31, 1999. It might have happened on the morning after October 31, 1517.

David P. Scaer

Ecclesiastical Geometry

My knowledge of geometry dates back to 1950. At a half century old it is probably not only outdated but replaced by something much more elaborate. As far as memory serves, geometry consisted of a number of theorems which were accepted as true simply because they were true. No one had to prove that a straight line consisted of an infinite number of points. Geometric theorems had to do with rules for circles, straight lines and triangles. Like geometry, theology also has, or at least it should have, its unproven theorems or hypotheses. In other words, we should be allowed to simply say something without proving it. Biblical criticism has its own unproven theorems; question them and you are out of the fraternity. Modern theology, in both its exegetical and systematic forms, has done this since the time of Schleiermacher. Barth defined the "encounter" as the meeting of an "I" and another "I." That other "I" is "you." Do you get it? If you don't get it, you never will and there is no use proving it to you, because you cannot prove these kinds of things.

I would like to offer the following two theories or hypotheses. First, "The greater a church's ecumenical alliances are, the smaller its membership becomes." The second is similar. "All churches participating in the alliance experience a proportionate decline." The opposite theorem, "the more the church isolates itself, the greater its membership will be," is not true. We want to stay with the ecumenical theorem; however, we want to offer some proof for our theorem, which may disqualify it as a theorem, because theorems cannot be proven. We will take our chances.

An article in the *New York Times* (one good argument for the article's infallibility) found its way to me in Pennsylvania through the August 31, 1999 edition of the *Palm Beach Post* out of Florida. Its author is Randall Balmer, an Episcopalian layman who teaches religious history at Columbia University and holds his Ph.D. from Princeton

University. Datelined Chautauqua, New York (where the eastern intelligentsia summer), the article appears under this title: "A Lutheran is a Methodist is a Congregationalist is. . . . " Balmer comments on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's alliance with his own Episcopal Church, which he calls "another unfortunate step down the blind alley of ecumenism." (Wow!) But that's just for starters. "If these denominations hoped that such actions can stanch the hemorrhaging of their members, I can't imagine a less productive strategy." So we have ancillary proof for our theorem: the greater a church's ecumenical alliances are, the smaller the membership of it and its partners become.

Back to Professor Balmer. He traces the drive toward Christian unity to the desire of the churches of the 1950s and the Cold War to present a united Christian front. And what better way to do so than having the participating denominations to place their offices next to the umbrella organization of the National Council of Churches in Manhattan. Passively this "taught us the importance of mutual respect and communication across religious traditions, but it has also led to a diminution of theological distinctiveness. Mainline Protestant denominations in America have suffered appallingly from a lack of definition, doctrinal or otherwise. It's no longer easy to distinguish readily between, say, a Presbyterian and a Congregationalist, or a Methodist and a Lutheran. To a degree, ecumenism has collapsed beneath the weight of its own pretensions." In preaching cooperation, "it aspired to unite all Protestants, but in so doing it ratcheted its doctrine down to the lowest common denominators of agreement: peace, justice and inclusiveness. Those are noble principles, but they are unlikely to inspire popular allegiance. . . . According to an empirical index—attendance, membership, giving—mainline Protestants have declined since the mid-1960s, while more conservative, evangelical groups have grown." Again our theorem has proof and perhaps is no longer a theorem: the greater a church's ecumenical alliances are, the smaller the membership of it and its partner churches will be.

Balmer's indictment is still not concluded. "Tragically, in an increasingly pluralistic society, mainline Protestants are the only religious group lacking a voice. Mainline Protestants have exchanged their theological and historical heritage for a mess of potage, an ideology so calculated not to give offense that its very blandness is offensive. These Protestants—Lutherans, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Methodists—must regain the courage of their

convictions. Their salvation lies in a recovery of their own traditions rather in than in the chimera of unity."

In 1979 Baker Book House wanted to update E. H. Klotsche's *The History of Christian Doctrine* and the lot fell to me to add a chapter entitled "Theological Developments Since World War II." In it I made the outrageous prediction that the ecumenical movement would fall on hard times. The prophecy has come true and is still coming true. Churches in ecumenical alliances in which their distinctive doctrines have been compromised have suffered losses and are simply not taken that seriously. Recent alliances have eradicated distinctions between two such disparate groups as the Congregationalists and Lutherans—at least they were as different as water and oil in New England where I was a pastor. These alliances are also eroding their memberships and will continue to do so, at least according to Dr. Balmer's evidence.

Here there is a warning for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It is almost impossible that we will not be taken down by the ecumenical vortex. Organizationally we have kept our skirts clean, so the title, "A Lutheran is a Methodist is a Congregationalist is . . . . " does not apply to us. But someone looking at the praise bands in church and college chapel services may say "A Lutheran is an Assembly of God is a Church of God is a Methodist . . . " You complete the sentence.

David P. Scaer

Book Reviews

***Whether It Can Be Proven the Pope of Rome is the Antichrist: Francis Turretin's Seventh Disputation.* By Francis Turretin. Translated by Kenneth Bubb. Edited by Rand Windburn. Protestant Reformatin Publications. Forestville, California, 1999. x+130 pages. $15.00.**

As Reformation Day A.D. 1999 approached, the Lutheran World Federation, and hence its member body the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, stood poised to sign the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* with the Roman Catholic Church. Not surprisingly, there is little mention from these two bodies of Luther's claim that the pope is the Antichrist. "This [the doctrine of papal supremacy] is a powerful demonstration that the pope is the real Antichrist who has raised himself over and set himself against Christ, for the pope will not permit Christians to be saved except by his own power, which amounts to nothing since it is neither established nor commanded by God" (SA II, IV:10). Even the more irenic Melanchthon clearly links the papacy with the Antichrist (Tr 39): "But it is manifest that the Roman pontiffs and their adherents defend godless doctrines and godless forms of worship, and it is plain that the marks of the Antichrist coincide with those of the pope's kingdom and his followers."

The Reformed tradition accepted the Lutheran argument that the pope is the Antichrist. One of the more able treatments of the subject from the pen of an American proceeded from Princeton Seminary's Charles Hodge (*Systematic Theology*, 3 volumes [London and Edinburg: Thomas Nelson and Sons; New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1871], 3:813-832). Hodge saw himself as no innovator, however. He simply sought to repristinate the Reformed theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hodge anticipated the problem many Americans would have with Reformed scholasticism—the language barrier would prove insurmountable. Indeed, translations of "orthodox" Reformed theology of the post-Reformation period are as illusive as those of Lutheran Orthodoxy.

That brings us to the present book. It is a partial translation of Francis Turretin's *Concerning Our Necessary Secession from the Church of Rome and the Impossibility of Cooperation with Her*, published about 1661. François Turrettini (1623-1687) was one of the most able defenders of Dortian Orthodoxy, better known among Lutherans as "Five-point Calvinism" or "Tulip Theology." His most important work, *Institutio theolgiae elencticae* (Three parts, Geneva, 1679-1685), has recently appeared in English translation as *Institutes of Elenctic*

Theology.[1] Now another of his significant doctrinal treatises has appeared. *Whether It Can Be Proven the Pope of Rome is the Antichrist* is a biblical/systematic treatment that affirms that the pope is the Antichrist.

Turretin assembles a bevy of scriptural, philosophical, and social arguments to support his contention. Some arguments will sound familiar to Lutheran ears, for example, that the "pope rules as God in the place of God" as testified to in the Scripture. Further, Turretin notes that apostacy is a key trait and that the pope's adversarial nature opposes Christ. Other arguments are more derivative/historical in nature. For example, Turretin finds evidence for the pope's character as the Antichrist in the "common opinion of Protestants." Here he cites the more significant Reformed Confessions (the Helvetic, Belgic, Scottish, and Anglican, among others), as well as the Augsburg Confession and the Magdeburg Centuries from the Lutheran tradition.

Turretin brings all together to bolster his conclusion that separation from the Church of Rome is a confessional necessity. "Having been persuaded that the pope is the Antichrist, and since truly it is clear from the words of Scripture that this be so, we must conclude that our secession from his communion is consummately necessary and that it is quite impossible that there be a reconciliation between us, if things so remain as they are" (113).

Now the question that faces the present-day reader presents itself. Why is Turretin's conclusion that the pope is the Antichrist, which was a clear confession of the Reformed Tradition in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, essentially unknown in the American Protestantism of today? After all, American Protestantism certainly has its roots in the Reformed Tradition. Part of the undoing of Turretin's conclusion is embedded within his own argument. Put another way, while Turretin is fully convinced that the office of the papacy is, in fact, the Antichrist, one of the key arguments he develops to prove his point centers in the issue of fulfilled prophecy. Put simply, do the Scriptures speak of a future fulfillment of prophecy in regard to the Antichrist, or have such prophecies been fulfilled historically. Turretin affirms the latter. However, he does so by adopting an important medieval hermeneutic. The key to the

[1]translated by George M. Giger, edited by James T. Dennison Jr., 3 volumes (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing,1992-1997).

interpretation of prophecy for Turretin is the so-called "Year-Day Principle"; namely, that when the prophectic sections of the Scriptures speak of a "day," the interpreter must properly read "year." Futurists, according Turretin, see the forty-two months of Revelation 13:5 and the 1260 days of Revelation 12:6 as literal days. Such is not the case, for "this explanation is erroneous because the Scripture is not speaking of natural days, consistent with the literal meaning of the term 'day,' but instead speaking mystically of *prophetic days* which represent the number of years" (104). In the technical language of modern prophecy interpretation, Turretin is an historicist. However, his method—the Year-Day theory—has become the chosen hermeneutic of futurist premillennialists—those who believe that the prophecies of the Bible are yet to be fulfilled. Put another way, loosed from the constraints of the historicist claim that the papacy is the identifiable Antichrist—because the papacy fulfills the prophecies of the Scriptures—futurists have looked to the unfolding future (that is, the present) to identify the emerging Antichrist. In a sense, then, the pope *cannot* be the Antichrist for the futurist—the revelation of the Antichrist remains a coming event. Hence, American Protestants have delightedly expended their energy in identifying the Antichrist.[2]

Still, Turretin' s little treatise is a fascinating glimpse into the theology of the Reformed Tradition. In the end this little volume underscores the long-standing differences in theological method between orthodoxy in the Reformed Tradition and Lutheranism; though the language used by the two traditions is similar, the meaning attached to such language differs significantly.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

***Hermann Sasse: A Man For Our Times?* Edited by by John R. Stephenson and Thomas M. Winger. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999.**

This collection of essays, delivered at Saint Catharine's Sasse Symposium in the fall of 1995, is a *tour de force* on both the theology and life of Hermann Sasse, one of the most remarkable confessing

[2]One may see Robert Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall be no More: Prophecy Belief in American Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992).

Lutherans of our century. Reading Sasse is a theological-historical journey through the struggles of Lutheranism, particularly since the Prussian Union. There could hardly be a better way for the student of theology to cut his teeth on the issues the Lutheran Church and broader Christendom have encountered in the past two centuries than by reading Sasse. Only days before his death, Robert Preus penned these words:

> I believe that Hermann Sasse will be regarded, if this is not already the case, as one of the three most significant confessional Lutherans of our century, along with Francis Pieper and Werner Elert. I say *confessional* Lutherans, because he was no faddist but first and last throughout his productive life a confessional and confessing Lutheran. . . . My appreciation of the historic liturgy, the doctrine of the church, the ministry, and many articles of faith has been greatly enhanced by the many contributions of Sasse.[3]

The picture of Sasse in this collection of essays, while most often very favorable and appreciative, is also balanced. Ronald Feuerhahn's essay sketches the contours of Sasse's life, a treatment that cries out for that author to produce a full theological-biography of Sasse. On the North American scene only Lowell Green could have written the essay on Sasse's relations with his Erlangen colleagues. Green's connections with Reu's Wartburg Seminary and with Erlangen (especially Elert and Althaus) provide a rich context for a sympathetic but certainly critical treatment of Sasse. The essay helps clarify the underlying reasons for Sasse's high praise and occasional sarcastic criticism (at least in private correspondence) of Werner Elert. On more than one occasion Sasse called Elert, "The greatest confessor of the century . . . on paper." In Sasse's view, Elert had failed the Lutheran Confession at decisive moments, particularly in the church struggle, when Sasse pled with Elert to take the leadership of the confessionally Lutheran portion of the confession movement in the Hitler years, and then at the formation of Evangelical Church in Germany (EKiD). Yet, Green demonstrates that Elert rather courageously occupied the deanship of Erlangen's theological faculty year after year, and repeatedly shielded Sasse from the Nazis. Sasse's post-war stint as Pro-rector of Erlangen and the "de-Nazification" of that institution show Sasse to be a personally and confessionally beaten man.

[3]Preface by Robert D. Preus written for an as yet unpublished collection of Sasse essays.

Naturally, his hope for the future of the Lutheran Church turned to America. The essay by John Wilch on Sasse and the Third Reich provides rich documentation on Sasse's collaboration with Bonhoeffer on the Bethel Confession, and on how that strongly Lutheran document met its unfortunate end as the effort to confess was co-opted by Barth and unionistic Lutherans. Thus Sasse's protest at Barmen.

John Kleinig, a student of Sasse, notes his teacher's major themes in the area of worship (the real presence as the heart of the liturgy; the proclamation of the gospel in the liturgy; liturgy as prayer). Kleinig argues that, while Sasse consistently argued for liturgical freedom, he had "no time for liturgical experimentation. He always taught us that we should use our freedom in a catholic way to retain the best of the past and affirm our continuity with the church of all ages." It is Sasse's great insight into the connection between liturgy, confession, and dogma that Kleinig believes will help us today develop a liturgical theology "as the decline of individualism in our post-modernist society gives way to a renewed interest in ritual and ceremony." Tom Hardt's contribution investigates Sasse's view of the use of philosophy in theology. In this intriguing essay Hardt gently takes his great teacher to task for his criticism of Pieper. According to Sasse, Pieper, following uncritically the lead of the seventeenth-century dogmaticians, made too much of the natural knowledge of God. Hardt demonstrates, however, that Sasse, in his struggle against Barth's denial of natural theology and God-given natural orders, defended Pieper's very position. Kurt Marquart's essay presents an eyewitness's account of the dealings pre- and post-union in the Australian church and documents the events surrounding the coupling of the two Australian churches. He shows that Sasse definitely moved on his doctrine of Holy Scripture. Unfortunately, his great planned "opus magnum" on Scripture remained unfinished at his death. Marquart rightly notes that Sasse's attempt to find a via media between strict inerrancy and a more accommodating position was similar to the attempt to find the via media between the *est* and *signficat* in the Sacrament of the Altar. It cannot be done. The contribution of the editors, Stephenson and Winger are significant too, as are the other essays, but space and time do not allow comment. If the volume lacks anything it is in the area of Sasse's relationship with American Lutherans.

Hermann Sasse: A Man For Our Times? A confessional Lutheran cannot but say "YES!" For Sasse doctrine and life, dogma and liturgy

were inseparable. At a time also in hitherto confessional Lutheranism—especially in the bureaucratic enclaves of the church—when there is precious little serious reflection upon dogma and its relationship to pragma, Sasse could not be more timely.

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***The Christian Polemic Against the Jews in the Middle Ages.* By Gilbert Dahan. Translated by Jody Gladding. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998.**

This is a book which does not live up to the promise of its title. There are hints that the writer's conclusion that "this literature [is] an appealing and lively body of work to read" (119) is probably an accurate one, but the analysis of the material was rather shallow.

Having said that, the book does provide a general introduction to the polemic of the period. Dahan reminds the reader of the three basic forms of polemic: *testimonia*, treatises, and dialogues. He then groups the writings of the period under those general topics. In bits and pieces, Dahan gives his readers some tantalizing quotations. However, he fails to pursue the actual theological strands of the argumentation.

In particular, he could have pursued the exegetical approach of Guillaume of Bourges, a converted Jew, in his *Book of the Wars of the Lord* written about 1235. His interpretation of the road to Emmaus (50) suggests a need to examine the work more closely. Why did he convert? According to Dahan the polemic stressed authority (the biblical text) and reason. A convert like Guillaume would have made an interesting case study.

This work invites those seeking a topic for a doctoral dissertation topic to plunge into some of these sources at a deeper level. Lutherans might want to ask the question: What do the writings of the Middle Ages teach us about our own attempts to speak to the Jews of today, not as ecumenists, but as those who desire to profess Christ as the center of the Scriptures?

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