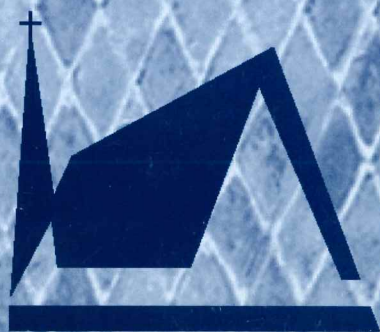


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The Confessional Movements in the Scandinavian Countries

Jan Bygstad

I. A Brief History of the Scandinavian Churches after the Reformation

To understand properly the contemporary situation of the confessional movements in the Scandinavian churches requires an outline of the post-Reformation history of those churches. The state-church system that is still prevalent in the Nordic countries has resulted in certain distinctive characteristics that would otherwise be incomprehensible. This paper concentrates on the situation in Norway, both because it is the situation with which the author is most familiar, and because the situation is essentially similar in the other Scandinavian countries.

There are two features that uniquely distinguish church life in the Scandinavian countries. The first is the state-church system. The second is the role of the free lay organizations. These two features condition each other to the point that the strong position held by the lay organizations is unthinkable without the state-church system.

For more than 400 years (1319/97-1814) Norway was united with Denmark. In the beginning this was a union between equal partners, but the Great Plague (1349) so impoverished Norway, that she gradually became totally dependent on Denmark. With the Reformation in Denmark-Norway, Norway lost the remainder of her political sovereignty. The last Roman archbishop's (Olav Engilbreksson in Nidaros) struggle against the king's reformation was not only a religious contest, but also a battle for Norway's national independence. Archbishop Olav played on the strings of nationalism in a futile attempt to retain Norway for the Roman Catholic Church. By the time Olav fled in April 1537, Norway had nearly become a Danish colony. The new king in Denmark, Kristian III, was crowned in 1536, and in 1537 he formally introduced the Reformation in Denmark-Norway. In that year the first Lutheran Church Order (*Kirkeordinantsen av 1537*), was introduced and Bugenhagen came to Copenhagen to ordain the first Lutheran bishops.

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This ordination caused a decisive ecclesiastical rupture. First, because Denmark-Norway now had an episcopate that did not have "apostolic succession," which was a fundamental break with canonical law. Second, because the new bishops did not keep the title of "Bishop," but were called "Superintendents." It was the king who was "Summus Episcopus" in the church.

The Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, along with the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism, served as the theological basis for the new national church. Politically, the king was the absolute ruler and sovereign in his country, and his sovereignty included command of the church. The king gave and approved all laws concerning ecclesiastical matters, and he alone had the right to appoint the superintendents. In this way the ministers of the church also became the king's officials, and representatives of his absolute power. The Lutheran idea of the general or spiritual priesthood of all Christians provided the basis for the king's supremacy by giving him the status as the foremost within this priesthood.

Cultural unity in the European nations at this time was safeguarded by the king and only one religion was allowed: *Cuius regio, eius religio* (whose region, his religion). This maxim does not necessarily demand, however, that the king should be the absolute sovereign of the church. Yet in Denmark-Norway this is indeed what happened during the Reformation.

Later, the king explicitly bound the church of Denmark-Norway to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, but also denied full acknowledgment of the Book of Concord. Thus the churches in Denmark and Norway are two of the few Lutheran churches in the world without the Book of Concord as their basis. One of the leading Lutheran dogmaticians in Norway in this century, Professor Leiv Aalen, somewhere said that "Perhaps it may be possible to be a Lutheran *without* the Book of Concord, but it is not possible to be a Lutheran *against* the Book of Concord!" This statement has had no little significance to many within the confessional movements in Norway.

In Sweden and Finland (which were one united kingdom at the time), the Reformation took quite a different course. It was not centered in royal policy, but a deeper and slower process within the church itself, in which the church vigorously defended herself against the king's repeated attempts to subdue her under his authority. The final result was a church

that, by her own decision, was reformed "from head to foot," and also acknowledged the Book of Concord as the genuine expression of her faith (during the "Uppsala" meeting in 1593). It is only in this century that the Church of Sweden has fully come under the disgraceful bondage of the state, and this happened when the church got her own council (or synodical meeting) for which the delegates to a large extent were *politically* elected. In this way the political parties are ruling the church, and there has been neither the power nor the will to break loose from this ideological bondage. In Sweden this has led to the banishment of candidates for the ministry who confess the orthodox faith. The formal basis for this is mainly feministic. Candidates who do not accept female ministers and refuse to cooperate with them are not ordained in Sweden today. Also, there are no longer any Swedish bishops who oppose the homosexual movement, but rather they radically support it. This came to its utmost point around July 1998, when the archbishop of Sweden opened the main church (the national sanctuary) in Uppsala to an utterly blasphemous exhibition of paintings portraying our Lord and His disciples in a homosexual context.

When Norway got her own constitution in 1814, §2 in the constitution stated that "The evangelical Lutheran religion remains the public religion of the state," and the king and his government were obliged to confess this faith. But during the breakthrough of the parliamentary system in 1884, the national assembly became the *de facto* head of the church. The representatives of the parliament were no longer confessionally bound. At first, this had no obvious consequences for the church. During our century, however, and especially after World War II, it has become increasingly evident that it is the secular state that is ruling the church. This has resulted in a situation where most of the church leaders today oppose the state-church system and desire some kind of free church, but the politicians of the parliament want to keep the church under their sway.

Still, the state-church system embraces most of the population of Norway. Twenty-five years ago, ninety-six percent of all Norwegians were members of the church, a membership obtained through baptism. Today, about ninety percent of the population are members of the church.

The second feature that distinguishes the Scandinavian churches is the role of the lay organizations. These organizations are numerous and fairly

large, most of them (apart from the Bible society) being for outer or inner mission. The roots of the free organizations are in the great revivals of the nineteenth century. These came in two waves. The first was through the awakening led by Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824) in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This revival was a kind of "sanctity-awakening" and was included with a strong pietistic character. It therefore often became very legalistic. This awakening swept through the whole of southern Norway, and made a deep and lasting impact on the population. Even today, 200 years later, one can sense Hauge's legacy. In areas where Hauge visited there are still prayer houses and an active Christian life, and areas where he did not go are usually spiritually barren.

The second wave broke upon Norway through the leadership of Swedish preacher C. O. Rosenius (1816-1868). It is not too much to say that "Rosenius saved Hauge," meaning that Rosenius had a genuine understanding of the Lutheran heritage and a clear grasp of law and gospel, which he was able to apply personally in his preaching and writings. This brought most of the Norwegian (and Scandinavian) lay movements into a more consciously Lutheran mainstream and gave it a clear Lutheran identity. Lay people, little by little, started building their own mission-houses (in Norway called *bedehus*, houses of prayer). Lay preachers traveled the country, holding their meetings in these buildings. The gatherings were also led by lay people. This movement, rooted in the prayer houses, formed the basis of the various missionary organizations that were established in the nineteenth century: the Norwegian Missions Association (1842), the Norwegian Mission to Israel (1844), the Norwegian Seamen's Mission (1864), the China Mission (1891), two large societies for inner mission, and so forth. These organizations have been driven by a genuine zeal for the salvation of the lost, and have made Norway the largest country in world-wide mission, in terms of the number of missionaries sent out in relation to the total population.

The stress on lay preaching and missionary work was theologically motivated by the Lutheran teaching about the priesthood of all believers. Sociologically, the *Konventikkelplakaten* ("Law concerning religious gatherings"), which forbade laymen preaching or gathering around the word of God without the official minister being present, drove the movement forward. This law led to Hauge's imprisonment in 1804, which lasted for almost ten years. The law was first annulled in 1842, but had

created a lot of enmity against many officials of the state church, who had urged that the law be enforced. Therefore, radical anti-clericalism is a significant feature of the lay movements in Norway. This anti-clericalism has, in some organizations and in various areas of Norway, resulted in the fact that believers with a strong and clear biblical confession almost never go to church. The slogan has been "In the church but not under the church." The ministers in the local parishes often were looked upon with a high degree of suspicion, not because they were heretics, but because they were labeled as "high-church." The clergy, therefore, were often not trusted as leaders within several of these organizations.

The anti-clericalism within the free church organizations was also often accompanied by a strong anti-liturgical attitude. This attitude had its roots in a minimalistic view of church order and a certain spiritualistic ecclesiology coming from Reformed influences in England (especially the Plymouth Brethren). During the first decades of the nineteenth century a few of the radical lay organizations also won the legal right to distribute holy communion without an ordained minister of the church being present. In this one sees the radical and logical consequence of the slogan "In the church but not under the church." This legal right contributed significantly to the antagonism that existed between parts of the clergy and the free organizations.

In the last half of the twentieth century this antagonism has decreased. It has become commonplace to compare Norwegian Christianity to an ellipsis: As an ellipsis has two centers, so does the church. The one center is the local parish, where the local minister is the leader. The other is the prayer house, where the laity are in charge, and where one will also find a strong engagement in missionary activity. The point in the example of the ellipsis is to portray the relationship between church and prayer house not as competitive or hostile, but as complementary. There also is a growing feeling of unity between the biblically-oriented laity and orthodox ministers of the church, a unity occasioned and strengthened by the spiritual need and doctrinal decay of the official church.

II. Spiritual Development in the Scandinavian Churches in the Twentieth Century

Scandinavian Christianity in this century has mirrored the experience of Protestantism in the West. Modernism and liberal theology have made

an increasing impact on church life. They have resulted in fierce battles over the fundamentals of faith, division and schism within the churches, and in the marginalization of confessional groups and the biblical faith.

The shift in Norway began in 1904, when a liberal, Johannes Ording, was appointed professor of systematic theology at the University of Oslo, which at that time was the only faculty educating candidates for the ministry in Norway. This led to the resignation of a leading orthodox professor in New Testament theology, Sigurd Odland. With the support of the laity and the free organizations, he was able to establish a free theological faculty in 1907, the *Menighetsfakultetet*. Six years later, in 1913, this faculty received its legal right from the Norwegian parliament (*Stortinget*) to graduate candidates for the ministry. In this there was also an acknowledgement of the sufficient academic level of the faculty.

Along with this there was a difficult theological battle going on in the media, both on the academic theological level, and in the newspapers. The main issues in this controversy were the basic points in the second article of the Apostles' Creed: the virgin birth, Christ's divine nature, His atoning death, and His corporeal resurrection. Of course, behind this was the question of the status and authority of Holy Scripture. After four years of truce during World War I, the controversy burst out again in 1919. The reason for this was that several mildly conservative leaders within the church now deemed it necessary to cooperate with the liberals. Professor Ole Hallesby quickly became the leader of the opposition to this development.

Hallesby had been appointed professor in dogmatics at *Menighetsfakultetet*. While having a background in the liberal camp, he had since experienced a radical conversion, which also made him a determined enemy of the liberal phalanx. He was indeed both fearless and outspoken, and led an intelligent campaign against the liberals, which won him confidence both from conservative ministers and from the lay organizations. Theologically Hallesby had his background in the Erlangen-school and in Pietism.

During the winter of 1919-1920 two important events occurred. First, the initial confessional organization of Scandinavia was founded. Its name was *Bekjennelsestro Presters Broderkreds* ("Brotherhood of Ministers Faithful to the Confession"). It was not an organization open to laity. The organization's name was later changed to *Foreningen for Bibel og*

Bekjennelse (FBB, "The Association for Bible and Confession"), and some thirty years ago was opened also to laymen. This organization today counts about twenty to twenty-five percent of all ministers within the official church as members.

Second, in late January of 1920 there was a large meeting in Calmeyergaten Mission House in Oslo, which drew representatives from all the lay organizations in the country. The leaders were Dr. Hallesby and the chairman of the Inner Mission, Mr. Fredrik Wisløff. The meeting produced two resolutions, later labeled "The Calmeyergate Program," which were adopted almost unanimously. The first resolution stated that Christians wanting to be faithful to God's revelation "are not to enter into voluntary cooperation with those who have broken away from the authority of the Bible." The second noted that "Within the free Christian work we will keep watch that only people who are unreservedly standing on the fundamentals of Holy Scripture as our church is witnessing it in her Confession will be elected and called as representatives or workers." Dr. Hallesby also wanted the assembly to support a separation between church and state, but this did not obtain sufficient support.

During the following ten years the liberal influence was broken within most of the church, and the liberals were silenced for several decades. Yet, no steps were taken to deprive the liberals of their positions in the church! The leaders in the official church were content that their mouths were closed and their influence repressed.

The "Calmeyergate program" recognized that the Church of Norway was a divided church. It became an accepted opinion that within the outward church body two churches were living side by side: the true church, which is Christ's body, and the false one, which is the harlot of Babylon. In consequence this meant a break in church fellowship: *Nulla communio in sacris cum hereticis et schismatici*. The result is that for several years the Church of Norway experienced the peculiar situation that within the same church body there was a break in church fellowship. This break had, for most of this period, been among the lay mission organizations and the liberal teachers and ministers of the official church. However, with the emerging issue of homosexuality, public and outspoken breaks between minister and minister and between minister and bishop became the rule.

Some fifteen years after World War II, the church went into the second stage of her struggle with liberal theology. Now it was no longer the fundamentals of faith or basic points regarding the Bible that were at stake, but a question that to most people seemed to be a "small" one and seemed only to have implications on church order: the question concerning female ministers. Already in 1937 the Norwegian parliament had voted in favor of this reform and had approved a law concerning the matter. The first woman was ordained in 1961 by the liberal bishop in Hamar. (Denmark and Sweden were a few years ahead of Norway.) This led to strong opposition from the other bishops and from the rest of the church. Again, however, the opposition restricted itself merely to verbal statements. The confessional leaders did not take any binding actions against this ecclesiastical way of taking the law into one's own hands. Seven years later only three more women had been ordained. But now the social democratic government was appointing one bishop after another who was willing to ordain women, and the process gained momentum. Presently one finds no bishops in Norway, Denmark, or Sweden who oppose the ordination of women and in Finland there is only one. There are a growing number of female ministers in Scandinavia: in Sweden today about fifty percent of the clergy are women; in Denmark and Norway the percentage is much lower, but steadily increasing. In 1993, Norway was one of the first Lutheran churches in the world to have a female bishop, Rosemarie Köhn in Hamar. She is clearly liberal and a strong advocate on behalf of the gay movement, which reflects her general antinomian perspective. One of the most revealing facts concerning her appointment were the words that were uttered by the secretary of state who appointed her. As a representative of the social democratic party he said that "our Lutheran faith has always been built on the acknowledgment that man can obtain new understanding," and that in this respect modern society has to be the teacher of the church, which is too attached to antiquated views. As he put it: "The king (through his cabinet) leads the way, the church follows." In many ways, this is sadly true in Norway.

This reform had a profound and deep impact on most of Norwegian Christianity and has led to certain significant consequences for the confessional movement. First, it gradually broke down the common opinion in many parts of lay Christianity about biblical inerrancy. Because the people within the lay movements usually did not want to

establish their own congregations with separate administration of the sacraments, they went to church when they wanted their children baptized. Very often they let themselves be ministered to by female clergy. Of course this involved a growing accommodation to the situation, and a de facto breakdown in the conscious resistance against the liberal forces. One event that confused the situation was when the conservative free theological faculty, founded by Prof. Odland back in 1907, turned around and accepted women's ordination in 1973. This has led to the bewildering feature in Norway that it is possible to be deemed a conservative theologian even if one accepts women pastors.

The third important stage in the spiritual development within the Scandinavian churches came at the close of the twentieth century. The 1990s were a time predominantly characterized by the homosexual issue, and a bitter battle took place in all mass media and on every level within the church. In Norway homosexuality was decriminalized in 1972. Twenty-one years later (1993) Norway followed Denmark and became among the first countries in the world to institute a law establishing a marriage-like partnership between persons of the same sex. This relationship did not receive the name "marriage," but persons living in such a partnership had the same legal status as married couples, with one exception: they did not yet have the right to adopt children. The gay organizations have become a major force in public opinion. They dominate television and the press, and are running a very efficient campaign to achieve two goals: they want the legal right to adopt children, and they want to bring the church to her knees. The reason that these organizations are targeting the church is the acknowledgment that the church is the last moral force in society resisting their lifestyle. Within the churches the gay organizations have a strong and cunning ally in the theological modernists. They have demonstrated an exceptional ability in obtaining leading positions within the church. The aims they are aspiring to reach in the church center on two specific points. First, ecclesiastical acceptance of homosexuals living in partnership as ministers, and second, a church rite for marriage of persons of the same sex.

In Denmark and Sweden the first issue is no longer a matter of discussion. There is a growing number of openly gay and lesbian ministers. On the second point the bishops of these two countries have taken a formal procedure, and have taken the issue into further

consideration. Sweden has yet to make any formal decision on the matter. The Danish bishops made a statement in the autumn of 1997 where they abstained from introducing a church rite. Instead, they made it a voluntary matter whether a minister would pray to sanctify such a relationship, and expressly stated that they could not see that "living in a homosexual relationship was in contradiction with the article on justification by faith."

In Norway things have not gone as smoothly for the homosexual activists (it is common to say that Norway is ten years behind Sweden in most matters of this kind). Among eleven bishops in the Church of Norway there are now four supporting the gay organizations (the fourth being the former general secretary in the Lutheran World Federation, Gunnar Stålsett, who was appointed bishop in Oslo in 1998). On the other hand, the whole political establishment is supporting the gay activists. The bishops' biannual meetings have long been regarded as the institution giving the church's public standing on various theological and also political issues. Therefore the bishops always have aspired to give unanimous public statements. They seek this because they see themselves as having the "office of unity" in the church. During the spring meeting in 1995 this unity broke down precisely on the homosexual issue, and the bishops came out with a divided statement. There were eight bishops with a conservative and three with a liberal stand. What was really serious in this statement was that the conservative bishops, in a vain attempt to avoid the growing antagonism in the church, expressly stated that the aberrant view was not heretical, but only an "opinion" that was both feasible and legitimate within the framework of the Christian faith. Thus they expressly said that practicing gays and lesbians were not to be denied the Holy Sacraments, but on the contrary, they were to be included in the fellowship and worship of the local congregations. Second, living in a homosexual relationship was in contradiction to God's will, but not a sin. Finally, having different opinions on this matter did not and should not destroy the unity within the church.

Thus even the conservative bishops reduced the importance of the question to the realm of *adiaphora*, something that created an indignant and terror-stricken reaction throughout most of the Church of Norway. The motivation of the bishops for this was first—under the strong hand of its *preses* (*primus inter pares*) bishop Andreas Aarflot in Oslo—to try and rescue what was left of ecclesiastical unity, and secondly to rescue the

church from a critical collision with the politicians of the parliament, which would have meant a deep crisis for the whole state church system.

Much has happened in the Church of Norway since then, but it seems that the outcome of it all is that the church system has as its prime goal its own survival, and this goal is being achieved through theologically ambiguous statements that aim not to provoke the ruling forces in society too much. "Truth is the first victim in war," as Winston Churchill said.

III. The Confessional Movements in the Scandinavian Countries

As noted earlier, the first confessional organization in Scandinavia, *Foreningen for Bibel og Bekjennelse*, was founded in Norway in 1919. Corresponding organizations in the other Scandinavian countries were not found before the 1960s. In Sweden, "Ecclesial Gathering around Bible and Confession" (*Kyrklig Samling*) was founded around 1965, the intention being to gather all Bible-believing organizations under one "umbrella" in a network-like fellowship. The leading force here was the renowned and exceptionally gifted bishop Bo Giertz. The occasion causing the creation of *Kyrklig Samling* was primarily the ordination of women, an issue that has been causing an almost persecution-like situation for orthodox ministers in Sweden because of the strong feministic influence in society.

Denmark has seen a slowly growing confessional movement, which began when a group of ministers issued a statement in 1964 called "The Yes and No of the Church." This group of no more than eleven ministers soon received the name of the statement associated with them, and about ten years later the movement was formed into an organization having almost the same name as her Swedish counterpart (*KSBB*).

During the 1960s the confessional movements in all the Scandinavian countries faced somewhat of a turning point. Until then the orthodox stand had represented the mainstream in church life. In spite of fierce theological controversies during the past decades, orthodoxy was in the majority and set the tone on all levels within the church. With the issue of the ordination of women, however, this situation changed radically within a period of ten years. From representing the ecclesial mainstream, the orthodox faith gradually was reduced to a minority and was soon

seen as sectarian. Norway experienced two special features in this area that distinguished it from Denmark and Sweden.

First, a set of ecclesial rules was drawn up called "the traffic regulations," which aimed at avoiding conflicts and collisions. These "traffic regulations" gave orthodox ministers the right to withdraw from fellowship with female ministers and from all kinds of cooperation that compromised their convictions. The "traffic regulations" have been widely accepted by all parties in the church, and have reduced the conflict level considerably. The problem, though, is that these regulations imply and admit a pluralistic view on these sorts of questions, a fact that has been overlooked to an astonishing degree.

Secondly, the Church of Norway gradually developed a new "establishment" at its top level. This establishment was in favor of women's ordination, yet, at the same time, defined itself as conservative and as the ecclesial center. From their "centrist" position they politically defined the two "wings" of the church, the left wing being the liberals, and the right wing the orthodox. The orthodox side had perhaps as many as four times the number of the liberals. In 1977, Andreas Aarflot became bishop in Oslo and *preses* among the bishops. He was an extremely strong and able bishop, and he claimed to be theologically conservative. During his episcopacy, which lasted until 1998, he followed a determined church policy. He effectively excluded the right wing from every influential position in the church, thus marginalizing the orthodox faith and wiping it out from the public testimony of the church. On the other hand the left wing was included as part of the church's apparatus on every level in spite of their (until then) relatively small representation. The reason for this was largely political: to achieve his goals in reform policy, Aarflot deemed it necessary to stay on good terms with the political establishment. One of the main means for this was to create a kind of "balance" between the liberal and the conservative camp. The orthodox camp was labeled "irresponsible" because they easily could provoke a crisis in the relationship between church and state. The price of this church policy has been a kind of institutionalized pluralism within all councils of the church. Even the new council for doctrinal matters (founded in 1987), which has the task of keeping doctrinal discipline, is pluralistic in this way.

Denmark and Sweden had no equivalent to the "traffic regulations." In Sweden this meant that when the feminist wave came in the beginning of the 1970s, orthodox belief and practice very soon became socially unacceptable. Feminism has, more or less, become the central issue to confessional Lutheranism in Sweden in its struggle to maintain its integrity. It has become the cause of banishment of orthodox candidates from the ministry. The Church of Sweden today is utterly pluralistic. One can believe or preach whatever one likes, and live any way one pleases, but if one is against women's ordination one is excluded from the ministry.

The question of female ordination had a healthy influence on the confessional movement in Norway. During the fifty some years since the founding of the *Foreningen for Bibel og Bekjennelse* (FBB), there has always been clarity concerning the central doctrinal points. But this had been coupled with a feeling of self-security – after all the confessionals also represented the mainstream. Within a few years this changed. The new situation forced a new consciousness, not only on biblical and doctrinal matters, but also in reflection on ecclesiology: What are the ecclesiological consequences of heresy as well as church disorder? The Norwegian confessionals received strong impressions from the Swedish situation, and in 1969 the organization "Renewal of the Church" (*Kirkelig Fornyelse, KF*) was founded. This was a kind of "high church" movement, and its goal was the renewal of the church through the renewal of her prayer life and liturgy. KF never has had more than 120 members, and most of them were also members of FBB. FBB had, until then, been somewhat indifferent in ecclesiological matters, and it united "high church" and "low church" theology. This gradually changed, and for seven years during the 1980s FBB had a most able chairman, Asle Dingstad, who also had his spiritual home in this "high church" movement.

In the 1970s Norway experienced a harsh battle around the question of abortion. The social democratic party finally won the battle in the parliament, which resulted in a law on free abortion in 1975. This led to two sensational episodes in the church. The day that the parliament voted for abortion, the bishop who most strongly had opposed this in the public, Per Lønning, resigned. This won him enormous respect within the church. Secondly, a year later, a parish minister in northern Norway, Børre Knudsen, resigned from that half of his office which implied loyalty to the government, but at the same time maintained his congregational

and ecclesial duties. He therefore refused to receive wages and to answer mail from the government. He argued that a state, which publicly had renounced its duty as a Christian state through giving laws that were anti-Christian, no longer had any legal right to govern the church. This he substantiated by referring to the special Norwegian confession which was made during World War II, "The Fundament of the Church" (*Kirkens Grunn* from 1942), where the Church of Norway as a whole broke with the Nazi state, and at the same time maintained its work as the Church of Norway. The bishops and ministers also declined their wages from the government. Børre Knudsen's bishop protected him, and the government therefore could not touch him. But as soon as the bishop resigned, the government appointed a new one who would be at its disposal in this matter. Pastor Knudsen was put to trial and deprived of his ministry. His case had to be tried, even up to the Supreme Court. Here the sentence did not confine itself to the isolated case of Pastor Knudsen, but also gave a juridical opinion on the relationship between church and state. The essence of this was found in the sentence "The state is the church!"—a sentence that de facto deprived the church of the right of self-determination.

During the 1980s, two more pastors were deprived in court of their ministries on the same grounds. These three continued as ministers in small congregations that followed them and were willing to support them, and formed a union called *Strandebarm prosti*. A large number of pastors within the confessional movement founded a supporting network, especially on behalf of Børre Knudsen, the network simply being called "The Contact Net." The significance of these events to the confessional movements was that it forced new reflection on the relationship between church and state. Seeing how the state wanted ideological control of the church in such manner, these events led to a more determined opposition to the whole system. On the other hand it seemed that the bishops were only too willing to be the obedient servants of the government when it came to church order, and this led to a growing distrust between the confessionals and the bishops.

In 1991 a new confessional organization was founded, "Joint Deliberation on the Fundamentals of the Church" (*Samråd på Kirkens Grunn*, SKG). The core of this new organization was the "Contact Net" (which now was dissolved). Its aim, however, was not primarily theological consciousness (as FBB), nor liturgical renewal (as the KF), but

to establish a practical alternative to the Church of Norway, and through this, to prepare for an exodus. Norway was divided into five areas each led by a "Guide" (there still was no move to appoint and ordain an alternative bishop). The strategy was first to make what was called an "inner exodus," establishing an ecclesial substructure within the church, and then, in time, to prepare for the real exodus. This was seen as a bold step by the establishment of the official church, and led to rather harsh reactions in the press.

Unfortunately, the leadership of SKG consisted exclusively of persons from the "high church" movement. These had, very much inspired by their Swedish connections, become increasingly open towards Anglican and Roman Catholic Christianity. They were strong leaders—to a certain extent rather strong-willed—and, in spite of widespread skepticism, dragged the organization into fellowship with the Anglican confessional movement "Forward in Faith" (which was formed in 1994 in opposition to the opening of the Anglican church to female ministers), and a few years later via this connection also with the "Polish National Catholic Church" in the United States. When the organization was asked to revise this direction, and instead consider an alternative Lutheran network consisting of Lutheran confessional movements and Lutheran churches that were intact, the leadership voted against this with the consequence that the organization cracked (in the autumn of 1996), and the conscious confessional Lutherans left. This breakdown created deep wounds and a feeling of depression and resignation among most of the confessionals. A year later some of the central leaders of SKG converted to Roman Catholicism and also brought with them a number of theological students.

These events took place at the same time the controversy around homosexuality was at its peak in Norway. As noted above, during the spring of 1995, the bishops issued a divided statement. This statement provoked a joint reaction from the three confessional groups in Norway, which at that time still shared a strong feeling of unity. It comprised three points. It stated the biblical teaching on this matter, pronounced the three bishops teaching against the biblical doctrine "heretics," and advised no Christian to listen to nor stay in fellowship with them, and finally, recommended that every minister who was serving in their dioceses break communion with them, that is, no longer accept them as bishops,

not celebrate service with them, and not administer Holy Communion to them.

This happened during the author's time as chairman of the *FBB*, and it certainly led to quite an uproar. During the following year a number of confessional ministers broke fellowship with these bishops. The most prominent one in southern Norway was Asle Dingstad (former chairman of the *FBB*), who was now dean in the small city of Larvik, serving under the heretical Bishop Osberg.

In northern Norway events turned in a more radical direction. The pastors who broke with their heretical bishop asked the government to give them an alternate bishop, as according to Norwegian church order it is both a "right and a duty" for a minister to have spiritual supervision. This request was denied them, and some of them consequently took measures to ordain their own bishop, the aforementioned Børre Knudsen. Knudsen enjoys a deep respect among believers because of his hearty witness and uncompromising stand all the years since he broke with the state, a stand that to him personally has had a considerable price. The ordination took place on April 6, 1997, based on the wording in the *Treatis on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* (66 - 72), and on Martin Luther's letter of 1523 to the congregation in Leisnig ("*That a Christian Congregation Has the Right to Judge Every Doctrine and Call Ministers*," WA 11, 408 - 416).

This led to two responses. First, the ministers in northern Norway who ordained Bishop Knudsen were put on trial, and, in late 1999, were in court. The liberal bishop could not tolerate this kind of rebellion, which in his eyes endangered the "unity" of the church, a unity of which he as bishop was the symbol. The sentence has not yet fallen. Second, Asle Dingstad did not join in the ordination of an alternate bishop, but because of his high position in the church (as dean, *Prost*) he has caused a considerable amount of distress to his liberal bishop. The bishop, therefore, at last put him on trial before the Church's doctrinal committee. The question that he wants to put to the test is whether it is in accordance with the doctrine of the unity of the church to deny having fellowship with the bishop. Dingstad, in turn, has put this question before the tribunal: "Is it in accordance with the gospel (referring to Augsburg Confession VII) to accept homosexual practices?" He publicly stated that anything less than a clear "No" to this question would lead to his resignation from the Church of Norway. The doctrinal committee of the

Church of Norway gave its verdict on March 7, 2000. The verdict reads, in short, that the liberal view on homosexual practices "is not necessarily contrary to apostolic Christendom," that "the issue [about homosexual practice] is not a question about eternal salvation or condemnation," and that "this question is not church dividing." Consequently, Asle Dingstad's denial of fellowship with his bishop on this issue was deemed unlawful. Dingstad therefore resigned from his service in the Church of Norway only a few days later. It is not yet clear whether he also will leave the church.

All conscious Christians in Norway feel it is a provoking fact that these faithful and able pastors shall have to be deprived of their offices, while at the same time the liberal (female) bishop of Hamar has broken all her promises and installed a lesbian pastor in the ministry. They rightfully ask this question: What kind of church has the Church of Norway become, when she is removing faithful, biblically-based pastors, while at the same time installing heretics? This question reflects a deep frustration and puzzlement among ordinary lay Christians. Things have degenerated into such disorder that a feeling of bewilderment and hopelessness is spreading because of the lack of any credible alternative. The breakdown of the SKG on the one hand, and the paralyzation of the free lay organizations on the other, have contributed to a depressed atmosphere among confessional ministers. The last half year, though, a new vision and will seems to be surfacing within some of the lay organizations. This implies a certain openness and growing readiness to launch a genuine alternative, meaning that organized groups in the prayer houses may transform to a full congregational life outside the jurisdiction of the bishops and the official church. This would mean a full administration of the means of grace and the institution of a ministry to this end. This development, to a large extent, is due to the influence from Denmark. The situation there has been far more difficult than in Norway for orthodox Christianity. The confessional movement has been smaller and weaker, and the downfall of the church far more rapid and all embracing. For some years now the confessional organizations there have been looking to Norway, hoping that Bishop Knudsen will gain a more general acceptance. The lay organizations have been discussing ecclesiastical alternatives. At present, we now see an increasing will within one of the largest organizations ("Lutheran Missionary Organization," LM) to accept and form local congregations with full administration of the means

of grace, and with these an ecclesial structure. At least five congregations have been formed, and this number will likely gradually increase. The problem for the confessional ministers is that they, in a way, are being "left behind." The lay organizations have long since managed themselves, and have not had any need for ministers. In the fight for biblical faith, these two parties have stood side by side. But when it comes to the future, it seems that the free organizations will continue in this self-sufficiency, leaving the ministers to an even more lonely destiny.

During the 1990s a most important development has taken place within the ecclesiology of the Church of Norway. As noted earlier, about ninety percent of the population are baptized and members of the national church. Of course, only a small percentage (from two and a half to four percent) of these confess faith and partake in worship and congregational life. Because the vast majority of church members are only nominal Christians, it has been the goal for most pastors to build *ecclesiola in ecclesia* in their local parishes. This implies some kind of dividing line between the nominal and the confessing church. Under the pressure from liberal theology and the politicians in the parliament, a new kind of ecclesiology is emerging and becoming increasingly dominant. This ecclesiology accepts all that are baptized as Christians apart from any kind of biblical faith or confession. In this way the whole people is being defined as a Christian people; the church is a *Volkskirche*. To make any demands concerning confession and a Christian life is called legalistic, because "the gospel in its very nature is unconditional." This makes for an antinomian ecclesiology, which claims that every kind of boundary is pharisaic, and therefore heretical. It is the people, as such, that shall have the right to decide on ecclesial and doctrinal matters through general suffrage. Of course, the National Assembly in such a context is becoming the lawful representative of the people. In this we find a theological legitimization of the secular state as the ruler of the church. In this context we now see secular politicians (especially from the social democratic party) becoming increasingly ideologically active towards the church, demanding the church to show "tolerance" and adjust to the general values of society. This certainly also implies that a pastor in such a church is obliged to give every member of the church the sacraments, regardless of how they live or what they believe. The church thus is being reduced to the state's religious service organization. Maintaining "the keys"

consequently becomes impossible. It is nothing but a reminiscence of earlier days' narrow-mindedness and intolerance.

In this respect we find an explicit antagonism between *das Volkskirche* and *das Bekenntniskirche*. Typically, in a newspaper interview a few years ago, the female bishop of Hamar maintained that she did "not want a church with a confessional profile, as this endangered the *Volkskirkche*." But a church which is not a *Bekenntniskirche* is not a true church. The "conservative" bishops are indeed trying to hold back in this situation. But since they at the same time are compromising in their relationship with the state and the government, there is little power of conviction in their stand. In reality, the Church of Norway is facing a change of identity. It is only a question of time before the Church of Norway will be in the same situation as the two other Scandinavian churches, where all the bishops are openly liberal, and the church order is despotic towards the orthodox camp.

In this situation it is becoming of vital importance for the confessional movements to uphold "the keys." This will be the focal point and central issue with which the confessional movements, both in Norway and in the rest of Scandinavia, will be standing or falling. At the same time, this is an issue for which we can expect no kind of understanding in public. But God has never let us choose the battlefield. We have to face the enemy where he is, and we cannot hide away in the vain hope that he will come back later at a more convenient time and place. In this time of trouble we cling to the promise of our Lord to his believing and confessing church: "... the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Soli Deo Gloria!

Luther and Theosis

Kurt E. Marquart

Inured by decades of perfunctory chatter, few now nurture great expectations for the “dialogues” of bureaucratic ecumenism. Yet truly significant events do occur there from time to time. There is no more eminent example than the Lutheran–Orthodox conversations conducted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church from 1970 to 1986—and this despite, or perhaps precisely because of, the modest aims of these exchanges.¹ The most dramatic development here—often described as a “breakthrough”—occurred at the Kiev meeting in 1977. The conversation partners discovered “with mutual astonishment” their considerable common ground in the Trinitarian and christological mysteries, in salvation history, and in their sacramental and eschatological orientations. The centerpiece at Kiev was the parallel between justification and deification, both “based on the real presence of Christ in the word of God, in the sacraments, and in worship.”²

The chief Lutheran spokesman on the subject was Helsinki University Professor Tuomo Mannermaa, who titled his lecture “Salvation

¹Kamppuri says that “the lack of an ecclesio-political goal has made the discussions ‘joyful ecumenism.’ There has been no desire to burden the discussions with sharply-defined objectives determined in advance” (Hannu T. Kamppuri, editor, *Dialogue Between Neighbours: The Theological Conversations between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, 1970-1986*, Publications of Luther-Agricola Society, Band 17 [Helsinki: Vammalan, 1986], 17). He goes on to note that both the Finnish and the Russian churches agreed “that in principle the eucharist should not be made a means of achieving unity, but that eucharistic fellowship expresses the already existing unity of the Church” (18-19).

According to Bishop Georg Kretschmar of the German Lutheran Church in Russia, the fifth bilateral dialogue (1988) between the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the Romanian Orthodox Church reached conclusions similar to those of the earlier Finnish-Russian talks (“Die Rezeption der orthodoxen Vergöttlichungslehre in der protestantischen Theologie,” in *Luther und Theosis, Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg*, Band 16 [Erlangen: Martin-Luther Verlag, 1990], 80).

²Hannu T. Kamppuri, editor, Mikkeli 1986. *The Seventh Theological Conversations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church*, Mikkeli, June 3rd-11th, 1986, Publications of Luther-Agricola Society, Band 16 (Helsinki: Vammalan, 1986), 14, 19.

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Interpreted as Justification and Deification." He expanded this 1977 essay into "*In Ipsa Fide Christus Adest*," which appeared in German in 1989, together with three related Mannermaa essays.³ The Latin phrase, translated "in faith itself Christ is present," is a direct citation from Luther's comments on Galatians 2:16, which this paper later examines in detail.

The theme has given rise to considerable scholarly literature. Of most immediate interest here is the rediscovery of neglected elements in Luther's theology, especially of his close ties to the ancient fathers, and to Saint Athanasius in particular. Indeed, the impetus of the Finnish-Russian conversations was so fruitful in this respect that Dr. Ulrich Asendorf, of the Lutherakademie Ratzeburg, speaks of the new departure in Luther studies (led largely by Mannermaa, his colleagues, and his students) as the threshold of a third Luther Renaissance—the first two having been those of Karl Holl and of Joseph Lortz, the Roman Catholic revisionist, respectively.⁴

Apart from Mannermaa and the splendid summaries in *Luther Digest*, the rich material on the subject is only beginning to become available in English.⁵ This study, "Luther and Theosis," relies chiefly on Mannermaa's

³Tuomo Mannermaa, *Der Im Glauben Gegenwärtige Christus: Rechtfertigung und Vergottung. Zum ökumenischen Dialog. Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums*, Neue Folge, Band 8 (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1989). The articles and their respective page numbers are: "*In ipsa fide Christus adest*. Der Schnittpunkt zwischen lutherischer und orthodoxer Theologie," 11-93; "Das Verhältnis von Glaube und Nächstenliebe in der Theologie Luthers," 95-105; "Zwei Arten der Liebe. Einführung in Luthers Glaubenswelt," 107-181; "Grundlagenforschung der Theologie Martin Luthers und die Ökumene," 183-200. These articles will be referenced in the remainder of the article according to shortened titles.

⁴Ulrich Asendorf, "Die Einbettung der Theosis in die Theologie Martin Luthers," in *Luther und Theosis*, Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg, Band 16 (Erlangen: Martin-Luther Verlag, 1990), 85-102.

⁵Tuomo Mannermaa, "Theosis als Thema der Finnischen Lutherforschung," in *Luther und Theosis*, Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg, Band 16 (Erlangen: Martin-Luther Verlag, 1990), 11-26; a translation of this article is available as "Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research," translated by Norman W. Watt, *Pro Ecclesia* 4 (Winter 1995): 37-48. Further references will be to the translation. *Luther Digest: An Annual Abridgment of Luther Studies*, edited by Kenneth Hagen (Sherwood, Minnesota: Luther Academy, 1995), 133-175. One may also see the recently published *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, edited by Carl E. Braaten

"*In ipsa*" and on several recent volumes of the annual proceedings of the Lutherakademie Ratzeburg. Since the subject matter is complex, selectivity must constrain the efforts. First, this paper will sketch the notion of deification (θέωσις, ἀποθέωσις, θεοποίησις) with a few illustrative texts; second, sample Mannermaa's deployment of Luther texts, especially from the great Galatians commentary; third, note the criticism that the Luther Renaissance in the wake of Karl Holl was flawed by neo-Kantian preconceptions; and finally, assess the new understanding of Luther on justification, in terms of Formula of Concord III and its rejection of Osiantrianism.

I.

The chief New Testament reference to theosis or deification is 2 Peter 1:4: "θείας, κοινωνοί, φύσεως" (AV: "partakers of the divine nature"; NEB: "come to share in the very being of God"). Certainly John 17:23 is to the point: "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given to them, that they may be one, as We are one; I in them and Thou in Me, may they be perfectly one" (NEB, upper case added). This at once suggests the divine nuptial mystery (Ephesians 5:25-32; one may compare 2:19-22 and Colossians 1:26-27), with its implied "wondrous exchange." That the final "transfiguration" of believers into "conformity" (σύμμορφον) with Christ's glorious body (Philippians 3:21; one may compare 1 Corinthians 15:49) has begun already in the spiritual-sacramental life of faith, is clear from "icon" texts like Romans 8:29, Colossians 3:10, and especially 2 Corinthians 3:18: "thus we are transfigured into His likeness, from splendor to splendor" (τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν). One may also wish to compare 2 Corinthians 4:16 and Ephesians 3:14-19.

The most celebrated patristic statement on the subject is no doubt that of Athanasius: "For He was made man that we might be made God (θεοποιηθῶμεν)."⁶ To avoid any pantheistic misunderstandings, it is

and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998).

⁶Athanasius, "On the Incarnation of the Word," paragraph 54.3, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, 14 volumes, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 4:65. *St. Athanasius on the Incarnation*, with an introduction by C. S. Lewis (London: Mowbray, 1953), 93, renders it: "He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God."

necessary to see that "deification" applies first of all to the flesh of the incarnate Son of God Himself. It is simply a traditional way of putting what Lutherans now call the second genus, or the *genus maiestaticum*, of the communication of attributes. John of Damascus put it like this:

It is worthy of note that the flesh of the Lord is not said to have been deified and made equal to God and God in respect of any change or alteration, or transformation, or confusion of nature: as Gregory the Theologian says, "Whereof the one deified, and the other was deified, and, to speak boldly, made equal to God: and that which anointed became man, and that which was anointed became God." For these words do not mean any change in nature, but rather the oeconomic union. . . , and the permeation of the natures through one another, just as we saw that burning permeated the steel. For, just as we confess that God became man without change or alteration, so we consider that the flesh became God without change. For because the Word became flesh, He did not overstep the limits of His own divinity nor abandon the divine glories that belong to Him; nor, on the other hand, was the flesh, when deified, changed in its own nature or in its natural properties. For even after the union, both the natures abode unconfused and their properties unimpaired. But the flesh of the Lord received the riches of the divine energies through the purest union with the Word . . .⁷

In a 1526 sermon Luther said: "God pours out Christ His dear Son over us and pours Himself into us and draws us into Himself, so that He becomes completely humanified (*vermenschet*) and we become completely deified (*gantz und gar vergottet*, "Godded-through") and everything is altogether one thing, God, Christ, and you."⁸ The following Luther

⁷John of Damascus, "Exposition of the Orthodox Faith," *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, 14 volumes (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 9:65-66.

⁸Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 58 volumes (Weimar, 1883-), 20:229,30 and following, cited in Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, volume 1 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 175-176. The present author has altered the translation given there in order to make it more literal. All subsequent references to the Weimar edition of Luther's works will be abbreviated WA.

paragraphs, which appear in English in Mannermaa, are given here with some slight repairs of that translation:⁹

Sadly, this [life] is now unknown in the whole world, and is neither preached nor pursued; indeed, we are even quite ignorant of our own name, why we are Christians and are so-called. Surely we are so-called not from Christ absent, but from Christ dwelling [*inhabitante*] in us, that is, inasmuch as we believe in Him and are mutually one another's Christ, doing for neighbors just as Christ does for us.

We conclude therefore that the Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor, or he is no Christian; in Christ through faith, in the neighbor through love. Through faith he is rapt above himself into God, and by love he in turn flows beneath himself into the neighbor, remaining always in God and in His love.¹⁰

In an early (1515) Christmas sermon, Luther notes:

As the Word became flesh, so it is certainly necessary that the flesh should also become Word. For just for this reason does the Word become flesh, in order that the flesh might become Word. In other words: God becomes man, in order that man should become God. Thus strength becomes weak in order that weakness might become strong. The Logos puts on our form and figure and image and likeness, in order that He might clothe us with His image, form, likeness. Thus wisdom becomes foolish, in order that foolishness might become wisdom, and so in all other things which are in God and us, in all of which He assumes ours in order to confer upon us His [things].

⁹"Theosis as a Subject," 48. Mannermaa himself recognizes that Luther's teaching of "a sort of theosis" may "not simply be equated with the patristic-Orthodox doctrine of deification" (7). For my own part I have no wish to advocate exotic theses of one sort or another. My chief purpose here is simply to let Luther himself speak to us in his own vivid way.

¹⁰*The Freedom of the Christian*, Latin: WA 7:66,69; German: WA 7:35-36,38; English: *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 volumes, edited by J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-1986), 31:368, 371. In "Theosis as a Subject," the end of the first paragraph has been rendered "mutually in one another, another and different Christ. . ." Subsequent references to the American edition of Luther's works will be abbreviated LW.

We who are flesh are made Word not by being substantially changed into the Word, but by taking it on [*assumimus*] and uniting it to ourselves by faith, on account of which union we are said not only to have but even to be the Word.¹¹

It may at first seem surprising that, so far as the actual use of the terms are concerned, there is in fact quite a bit more "deification" than "theology of the cross" language in Luther.¹² The reason should be obvious: "Deification" is part the church's traditional vocabulary, while that profound opposition, "theology of the cross" versus "theology of glory," is Luther's own coinage.

II.

What follows are some representative samples of Mannermaa's use of Luther, citing the *Luther's Works* version wherever possible.¹³ Many of Mannermaa's comments and the Luther citations may be found in full in the following translation. For the sake of clarity, Mannermaa's thesis-like headings remain. The numbering and lettering will indicate omissions. Unless otherwise indicated, the Luther selections are from the 1535 Galatians Commentary.

I. THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION AND CHRISTOLOGY

A. The Foundation of Justifying Faith in the Ancient Church's Christology

1. Christ as "the greatest sinner" (*maximus peccator*)

And all the prophets saw this, that Christ was to become the greatest thief, murderer, adulterer, robber, desecrator, blasphemer, etc., there has ever been anywhere in the world. He is not acting in His own person now. Now He is not the Son of God, born of the Virgin. But He is a sinner, who has and bears the sin of Paul, the former blasphemer, persecutor, and assaulter; of Peter, who denied Christ; of David, who was an adulterer and a murderer, and who caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord (Romans

¹¹WA 1 28:25-32, 39-41. Cited in "Grundlagenforschung," 192; "Zwei Arten," 163.

¹²"Theosis as a Subject," 37.

¹³"In ipsa," 11-93.

2:24). In short, He has and bears all the sins of all men in His body—not in the sense that He has committed them but in the sense that He took these sins, committed by us, upon His own body, in order to make satisfaction for them with His own blood.¹⁴

“But it is highly absurd and insulting to call the Son of God a sinner and a curse!”

If you want to deny that He is a sinner and a curse, then deny also that He suffered, was crucified, and died. For it is no less absurd to say, as our Creed confesses and prays, that the Son of God was crucified and underwent the torments of sin and death than it is to say that He is a sinner or a curse. But if it is not absurd to confess and believe that Christ was crucified among thieves, then it is not absurd to say as well that He was a curse and a sinner of sinners [Mannermaa’s German: “arch-sinner”]. . . . Isaiah 53:6 speaks the same way about Christ. It says: “God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” These words must not be diluted. . . .¹⁵

2. Christ as “the Greatest Person” (*maxima persona*) and “the only sinner” (*solus peccator*)

This is the most joyous of all doctrines and the one that contains the most comfort. It teaches that we have the indescribable and inestimable mercy and love of God. When the merciful Father saw that we were being oppressed through the law, that we were being held under a curse, and that we could not be liberated from it by anything, He sent His Son into the world, heaped all the sins of all men upon Him, and said to Him: “Be Peter the denier; Paul the persecutor, blasphemer, and assaulter; David the adulterer; the sinner who ate the apple in Paradise; the thief on the cross. In short, be the person of all men, the one who has committed the sins of all men. And see to it that You pay and make satisfaction for them.”¹⁶

3. Faith as Participation [*Teilhabe*] in Christ’s Person

Now that Christ reigns, there is in fact no more sin, death, or curse—this we confess every day in the Apostles’ Creed when we

¹⁴WA 40 1:433–434; LW 26:277.

¹⁵WA 40 1:434–436; LW 26:278.

¹⁶WA 40 1:437; LW 26:280.

say: "I believe in the holy church." This is plainly nothing else than if we were to say: "I believe that there is no sin and no death in the church. For believers in Christ are not sinners and are not sentenced to death but are altogether holy and righteous, lords over sin and death who live eternally." But it is faith alone that discerns this, because we say: "I believe in the holy church." If you consult your reason and your eyes, you will judge differently. For in devout people you will see many things that offend you; you will see them fall now and again, see them sin, or be weak in faith, or be troubled by a bad temper, envy, or other evil emotions. "Therefore the church is not holy." I deny the conclusion that you draw. If I look at my own person or at that of my neighbor, the church will never be holy. But if I look at Christ, who is the Propitiator and Cleanser of the church, then it is completely holy; for He bore the sins of the entire world.

Therefore where sins are noticed and felt, there they really are not present. For, according to the theology of Paul, there is no more sin, no more death, and no more curse in the world, but only in Christ, who is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, and who became a curse in order to set us free from the curse. On the other hand, according to philosophy and reason, sin, death, etc., are not present anywhere except in the world, in the flesh, and in sinners. For the theology of the sophists is unable to consider sin any other way except metaphysically, that is: "A quality clings to a substance or a subject. Therefore just as color clings to a wall, so sin clings to the world, to the flesh, or to the conscience. Therefore it must be washed away by some opposing motivation, namely, by love." But the true theology teaches that there is no more sin in the world, because Christ, on whom, according to Isaiah 53:6, the Father has laid the sins of the entire world, has conquered, destroyed, and killed it in His own body. Having died to sin once, He has truly been raised from the dead and will not die any more (Romans 6:9). Therefore wherever there is faith in Christ, there sin has in fact been abolished, put to death, and buried. But where there is no faith in Christ, there sin remains.¹⁷

¹⁷WA 40 1:444; LW 26:285-286. In the Creed we say that we believe "the holy

Omitting the rest, we go at once to the central point:

- B. 2. "*Fides Christo Formata*"¹⁸ [Faith Formed by Christ] — (that is, in radical opposition to the scholastic "*fides charitate formata*" [faith formed by love])

But where they speak of love, we speak of faith. And while they say that faith is the mere outline [μονόγραμμα] but love is its living colors and completion, we say in opposition that faith takes hold of Christ and that He is the form that adorns and informs faith as color does the wall. Therefore Christian faith is not an idle quality or an empty husk in the heart, which may exist in a state of mortal sin until love comes along to make it alive. But if it is true faith, it is a sure trust and firm acceptance in the heart. It takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object but, so to speak, the One who is present in the faith itself [*in ipsa fide Christus adest*]. Thus faith is a sort of knowledge or darkness that nothing can see. Yet the Christ of whom faith takes hold is sitting in this darkness as God sat in the midst of darkness on Sinai and in the temple. Therefore our "formal righteousness" is not a love that informs faith; but it is faith itself, a cloud in our hearts, that is, trust in a thing we do not see, in Christ, who is present especially when He cannot be seen.¹⁹

Therefore faith justifies because it takes hold of and possesses this treasure, the present Christ. But how He is present — this is beyond our thought; for there is darkness, as I have said. Where the confidence of the heart is present, therefore, there Christ is present, in that very cloud and faith. This is the formal righteousness on account of which a man is justified; it is not on account of love, as the sophists say. In short, just as the sophists say that love forms and trains faith, so we say that it is Christ who forms and trains

church," not "in the holy church." The "in" is added by the *Lutheran Worship* translation. It is not in Luther's original.

¹⁸Mannermaa ("*In ipsa*," 36) credits the expression "for example" to Heiko A. Oberman ("*Luther und die scholastischen Lehren von der Rechtfertigung*," in *Der Durchbruch der reformatorischen Erkenntnis bei Luther*, edited by Bernhard Lohse [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968], 423).

¹⁹Literally: "Who, though utterly unseen, is nonetheless present" (author's translation).

faith or who is the form of faith. Therefore the Christ who is grasped by faith and who lives in the heart is the true Christian righteousness, on account of which God counts us righteous and grants us eternal life. Here there is no work of the law, no love; but there is an entirely different kind of righteousness, a new world above and beyond the law. For Christ or faith is neither the law nor the work of the law.²⁰

This is why "faith makes a man God" (2 Peter 1:4) and again: "The one who has faith is a completely divine man [*plane est divinus homo*], a son of God, the inheritor of the universe. . . . Therefore the Abraham who has faith fills heaven and earth; thus every Christian fills heaven and earth by his faith. . . ." ²¹

Obviously there are many implications here as well for love, good works, and other important topics, as Mannermaa indeed goes on to show from Luther. It is enough to note here that for Mannermaa justification and deification coincide in that climactic sentence of Luther's from his comments to Galatians 2:16: "*In ipsa fide Christus adest*. In faith itself Christ is present."²²

III.

Why was this whole dimension of Luther's thought lacking or downplayed in the so-called Luther Renaissance? Mannermaa and his circle answer that certain philosophical predilections held sway that tended to screen out Luther's strong ontological realism.²³ By "ontology" or the "ontic" the Finns mean to stress not some particular philosophy, but simply the importance of being, of what is, or is the case. They point out

²⁰WA 40 I:228-229; LW 26:129-130.

²¹WA 40 I:182, 390; LW 26:100, 247, 248.

²²"*In ipsa*," 92: "The content of Luther's conception of deification can be expressed briefly in his well-known sentence, *in ipsa fide Christus adest*."

²³"Theosis as a Subject"; "*In ipsa*," 12,13; "Grundlagenforschung," 189-192; Risto Saarinen, "Gottes Sein—Gottes Wirken. Die Grunddifferenz von Substanzdenken und Wirkungsdenken in der evangelischen Lutherdeutung," in *Luther und Theosis*, Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg, Band 16 (Erlangen: Martin-Luther Verlag, 1990), 103-119; Risto Saarinen, "Die Teilhabe an Gott bei Luther und in der finnischen Lutherforschung," in *Luther und Ontologie*, Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg, Band 21 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft; Erlangen: Martin-Luther Verlag, 1993), 167-182.

that the neo-Kantian German idealist, Hermann Lotze (1817-1881) held that things-in-themselves, even if they exist, are unknowable. Instead of "static" substances there are "dynamic" relations, that is, an ever churning process of mutually impinging "effects" (*Wirkungen*). Such effects can be perceived and understood only in the forms provided by our own nature. Religious effects or influences, according to Lotze, belong not to the realm of nature, but to the domain of the "personal," that is, ethics and aesthetics.

Lotze's philosophy, they argue further, shaped the theologies of the enormously influential scholars Albrecht Ritschl and Wilhelm Herrmann, as well as those of Karl Holl and Reinhold and Erich Seeberg. "For Holl," says Mannermaa, "the real presence of Christ in faith means ultimately the will of man himself, inspired and inflamed by the will of God."²⁴ Luther was understood as a foe of "metaphysics," that is, of the ontological "rigidities" of traditional dogma. For all their vocal opposition to liberalism, Karl Barth and neo-orthodoxy shared liberalism's hostility to "static" substance thinking, and promoted a "dynamic" stress on action and becoming.

The Finnish criticism draws attention to the more general plight of modern Western thought. C. E. M. Joad spoke of the "stigmata of decadence," prominent among them being "a preoccupation with the self and its experiences, promoted by and promoting the subjectivist analysis of moral, aesthetic, metaphysical and theological judgments."²⁵ C. S. Lewis, in his article "The Empty Universe," employs the brilliant image of two ledgers, Subject and Object. First, all the particulars we thought existed in the universe are item by item transferred from the objective to the subjective side of the account: "The Subject becomes gorged, inflated, at the expense of the Object." Then, when everything has been drained out of the Object into the Subject, the Subject self-destructs as well.²⁶ The witty Reverend Sydney Smith (1771-1845) could see the trend already in his day: "Bishop Berkeley destroyed this world in one

²⁴"Grundlagenforschung," 190.

²⁵C. E. M. Joad, *Decadence: A Philosophical Inquiry* (London: Faber and Faber, n.d.), 117.

²⁶C. S. Lewis, "The Empty Universe," in *Present Concerns: Essays by C.S. Lewis*, edited by Walter Hooper (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 81-85.

volume octavo; and nothing remained, after his time, but mind; which experienced a similar fate from the hand of Mr. Hume in 1739."²⁷

To see what happens when theology catches the anti-ontological fever, one need only consult the *Christian Dogmatics* by Braaten and Jenson, where the pre-existence of the Son ("Jesus' metaphysical double"!) and the Spirit is ridiculed as a gratuitous invention of "timelessly antecedent extra entities." When the "extra" metaphysics are stripped away, here is what is left: "Truly, the Trinity is simply the Father and the man Jesus and their Spirit as the Spirit of the believing community."²⁸

None of this quivering, anorexic ontology for Luther! He knows a God who is not gingerly beaming thoughts and effects at us from afar while taking care to keep His real being (if He has any!) well away from us. With Luther biblical realism is in full cry:

The fanatical spirits today speak about faith in Christ in the manner of the sophists. They imagine that faith is a quality that clings to the heart apart from Christ [*excluso Christo*]. This is a dangerous error. Christ should be set forth in such a way that apart from Him you see nothing at all and that you believe that nothing is nearer and closer to you than He. For He is not sitting idle in heaven but is completely present [*praesentissimus*] with us, active and living in us as chapter two says (2:20): "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me," and here: "You have put on Christ. . . ."

Hence the speculation of the sectarians is vain when they imagine that Christ is present in us "spiritually," that is, speculatively, but is present really in heaven. Christ and faith must be completely joined. We must simply take our place in heaven; and Christ must be, live, and work in us. But He lives and works in us, not speculatively but really, with presence and with power [*realiter, praesentissime et efficacissim*].²⁹

²⁷Sydney Smith, *Sketches of Moral Philosophy*, cited in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 3rd edition, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 511.

²⁸Carl Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, editors, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2 volumes (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 1:155. This of course is my example, not Mannermaa's.

²⁹WA 40 1:545-546; LW 26:356-357; "In ipsa," 39-40.

By faith, finally,

you are so cemented [*conglutineris*] to Christ that He and you are as one person, which cannot be separated but remains attached [*perpetuo adhaerescat*] to Him forever and declares: "I am as Christ." And Christ, in turn, says: "I am as that sinner who is attached to Me, and I to him. For by faith we are joined together into one flesh and one bone." Thus Ephesians 5:30 says: "We are members of the body of Christ, of His flesh and of His bones," in such a way that this faith couples Christ and me more intimately than a husband is coupled to his wife.³⁰

But does not the very idea of deification suggest a theology of glory more than the theology of the cross? That all depends on how deification is understood. Luther's understanding, as we have it before us at some length, is through and through the purest theology of the cross. Mannermaa treats this also in terms of the contrast between the upward reach of human love towards all that is great and worthy and impressive in itself (scholasticism!), and the downward reach of God's love, which does not find, but creates, its own object.³¹

The point of the theology of the cross is not that Christ or God is not glorious and powerful, or should not be treated and worshiped as such, but that we can know this glory and power only by faith which grasps God under the very opposite appearances.³² It is ironic that the American translation of Heidelberg Thesis 19, which is pivotal for the whole theology of the cross, is marred by a serious error probably inspired by

³⁰WA 40 1:285-286; LW 26:168; "In ipsa," 51.

³¹"Zwei Arten," 130-145.

³²See Luther on Romans 12:2 (1515), LW 25:538-439. Also, from his *Bondage of the Will* (LW 33:62): "[Heb. 11:1] Hence in order that there may be room for faith, it is necessary that everything which is believed should be hidden. It cannot, however, be more deeply hidden than under an object, perception, or experience which is contrary to it. Thus when God makes alive he does it by killing, when he justifies he does it by making men guilty. . . . Thus God hides his eternal goodness and mercy under eternal wrath, his righteousness under iniquity. This is the highest degree of faith, to believe him merciful when he saves so few and damns so many. . . ." For the best explanation of the theology of the cross one may see Hermann Sasse, "The Theology of the Cross," in *We Confess Jesus Christ*, translated by Norman Nagel (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 36-54.

the very philosophical prejudices mentioned above.³³ Instead of saying "That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have been made [Romans 1:20]," Harold J. Grimm renders the final words, incredibly: "which have actually happened!"³⁴ Here the essence of the theology of the cross, firm reliance on the life, death, and resurrection of Our Lord, "which have actually happened," is written off as theology of glory!

All right talk about deification must pass at least a twofold test, to be genuine theology of the cross. The first is whether God and His life are accessible directly, or only in the crucified and risen Savior, and in His gospel means of salvation alone. For Luther, clearly, deification does not mean that God and His uncreated light are directly and experientially accessible by means of devotional exercises.³⁵ On the contrary,

God conceals and covers [the church] with weaknesses, sins, errors, and various offenses and forms of the cross in such a way that it is not evident to the senses anywhere. Those who are ignorant of this are immediately offended when they see the weaknesses and sins of those who have been baptized, have the Word, and believe; and they conclude that such people do not belong to the church. Meanwhile they imagine that the church consists of the hermits, monks, etc., who honor God only with their lips and who worship Him in vain, because they do not teach the Word of God but the doctrines and commandments of men (Matthew 15:8-9). Because these men perform superstitious and unnatural works, which reason praises and admires, they are regarded as saints and as the church.³⁶

³³See Reinhard Slenczka's profound observations on faith, Enlightenment, and history ("Die Gemeinschaft mit Gott als Grund und Gegenstand der Theologie. Vergöttlichung als ontologisches Problem," in *Luther und Theosis*, Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg, Band 16 [Erlangen: Martin-Luther Verlag, 1990], 27-48).

³⁴LW 31:40

³⁵Such is the case, apparently, with Gregory Palamas. One may see Georgios Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man* (Crestwood, New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 96-104.

³⁶LW 27:84-85.

In fact, "God dwells only in the man who perceives himself to be *farther from God and nearer the devil*. Precisely such a man is a *glorious dwelling, palace, hall and paradise, in which God dwells on earth*."³⁷ Elert also notes the abiding importance of "self-accusation" in Luther, in contrast to mysticism.³⁸ Although God the Blessed Trinity dwells in us, faith must seek and grasp Him not there or in fancied ecstasies, but solely and alone in His outward channels of salvation: "In the state of glory the Word will be without voice and letter, but in the state of wayfaring the Word is wrapped 'in sound, voice, and letters, just as honey is in the honeycomb, the kernel in the nut, marrow in the bones or the life in the flesh or the Word in the Flesh.'"³⁹

The second test is whether deification is driven by the downward movement of God or by the upward movement of man. Luther's answer is clear:

And that we are so filled with "all the fulness of God," that is said in the Hebrew manner, meaning that we are filled in every way in which He fills, and become full of God, showered with all gifts and grace and filled with His Spirit, Who is to make us bold, and enlighten us with His light, and live His life in us, that His bliss make us blest, His love awaken love in us. In short, that everything that He is and can do, be fully in us and mightily work, that we be completely deified [*vergottet*], not that we have a particle or only some pieces of God, but all fulness. Much has been written about how man should be deified; there they made ladders, on which one should climb into heaven, and much of that sort of thing. Yet it is sheer piecemeal effort; but here [in faith] the right and closest way to get there is indicated, that you become full of God, that you lack in no thing, but have everything in one heap, that everything that

³⁷"Zwei Arten," 160 (on the basis of Cruciger's summer postil [1544], WA 21:457).

³⁸Elert, *Structure*, 80-90, 140 and following; 166-176. I am indebted to Don Matzat for a timely reminder of these valuable references, "Assessing the Promise Keepers," *Christian News* (December 25, 1995): 1, 7-8.

³⁹"Grundlagenforschung," 193, citing the 1515 Christmas sermon, WA 1:29. One may also refer to *Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments* (1525), LW 40:79-223.

you speak, think, walk, in sum, your whole life be completely divine [Gottisch].⁴⁰

When one ponders the lively, full-blooded realism of Luther's theology, one can only wonder how such a legacy could have been so tragically squandered in world "Lutheranism" over the centuries. Chesterton complained about the Church of England's tendency to tolerate "underbelievers" but to persecute "overbelievers." Why this preference for ever less, for the minimal? Reductionist philosophy alone is hardly the whole story. Sin has a way of defending itself against God's saving incursions on a broad front. Two quite arbitrary examples, both of them to do with hymns, illustrate the thinning-out process.

Consider the sixth stanza of Nikolaus Herman's great Christmas hymn, "Praise God the Lord, Ye Sons of Men":

A wondrous change which He does make!
He takes our flesh and blood,
And He conceals for sinners' sake
His majesty of God.⁴¹

These are worthy thoughts, but they fail to convey the original sense:

Er wechselt mit uns wunderlich:
Fleisch und Blut nimmt Er an
Und gibt uns in seins Vaters Reich
Die klare Gottheit dran.

The original "exchange" has become a mere one-way "change" in English. And instead of *imparting* to us His "glorious Divinity" or "Godhead," the translation has Him merely *concealing* His "majesty of God"! *Lutheran Worship* Hymn 44, while getting rid of "sons" and "men," does improve what now becomes the fourth stanza, by restoring a genuine "exchange." But "His glory and his name" is still rather pale beside "His glorious Divinity."

The second example comes from the new Russian-German hymn-book "for divine services and official acts in Evangelical Lutheran

⁴⁰Sermon of 1525, WA 17 1:438; "In ipsa," 54.

⁴¹*The Lutheran Hymnal*, Hymn 105.

congregations and in the family circle."⁴² Of the 106 hymns, only one [46] is for holy baptism, but does not mention baptism (though the one confirmation hymn [75] does). There is only one hymn [77] for the Holy Supper, and it does not mention the Lord's body and blood. The four hymns [78-81] for confession and repentance mention neither absolution nor keys. The frightful decades of Communist persecution do not explain such sacramental impoverishment.

If there is such a thing as a characteristic "structure of Lutheranism,"⁴³ which distinguishes it from other confessions, then it must lie surely in a relentless realism of faith that will not let any of God's life-bearing gifts be spirited away into significances and abstractions. In theology *ἀλλοίωσις* has meant two quite opposite things. Zwingli used it as a device to shift the mysterious "exchange" between human and divine from the person of Christ to mere words. That is an unhappy exchange! John of Damascus apparently used the same term to express the genuine reciprocity of the Incarnation (first genus)—a happier exchange.⁴⁴ But the happiest exchange of all is that by which the Prince of Righteousness trades places with us paupers of sin—as Luther never tired of proclaiming in ever new and fresh imagery. Ulrich Asendorf has well said that Luther not only appropriated the full christological substance of the ancient church, but, "unlike the Eastern Tradition, gave it a Pauline interpretation and deepened it."⁴⁵ The East unfortunately missed out

⁴²*Russko-nemetskii sbornik dukhovnykh pesen. Russisch-Deutsches Gesangbuch* (Erlangen: Martin-Luther Verlag, 1995).

⁴³Werner Elert meant by this "structure" or "morphology" something broader than the configuration of confessional constituents I am tracing. He saw that theology does and must have consequences for the concrete embodiment of the church's life. His wide-ranging discussion supplies solid antidotes to the vapid isolation of "style" from "substance" now in vogue.

⁴⁴Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 volumes (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951-1953), 2:11,144; Martin Chemnitz (*The Two Natures in Christ*, translated by J. A. O. Preus [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971], 167) says that, in Book 3, Chapter 4 of his *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, John of Damascus has "*ἀλλοίωσις καὶ ἀντίδοσις*." In fact only "*ἀντίδοσις*" is found there (MPG 94:1000). Paul Jackson, Robert Smith, and D. Richard Stuckwisch have located all thirteen occurrences of *ἀλλοίωσις* in John of Damascus. The term has a respectable history in classical Greek.

⁴⁵Ulrich Asendorf, "Rechtfertigung und Vergottung als Thema in Luthers Theologie und als Brücke zur Orthodoxie," *Ökumenische Rundschau* 41 (1992): 177.

twice on the great debates about soteriology, once in Saint Augustine's time and the second time a thousand years later in Luther's.

Very God of very God, a real incarnation, genuine, full, and free forgiveness, life, salvation and communion with the Holy Trinity, imparted in the divinely powerful gospel and sacraments—including the evangelic doctrine as revealed, heavenly truth, not academic guesswork,⁴⁶ and the true body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar—all these mysteries to be cherished and handled for the common good by responsible householders in the God-given office, rightly dividing law and gospel (*sola fide!*): do not these constitute the "structure of Lutheranism"?

IV.

It remains only to test certain conclusions by the Formula of Concord. It should be clear from the outset, as Mannermaa also points out,⁴⁷ that FC III cannot possibly intend to reject the doctrine of Luther's Galatians commentary, because Article III concludes with an express approval of that commentary: "If anybody regards anything more as necessary by way of a detailed explanation of this high and important article of justification before God, on which the salvation of our souls depends, we direct him for the sake of brevity to Dr. Luther's beautiful and splendid exposition of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians."⁴⁸

What then of the customary opposition between Christ for and outside of us (*pro nobis, extra nos*) and Christ in us (*in nobis*)? Is it not Osiandrian to place the righteousness of faith in us rather than strictly *outside* of us? Is not Luther's "*in* faith itself Christ is present" therefore Osiandrian?

Actually the opposition between "*in*" us and "*outside*" of us is a rule of thumb rather than a precise doctrinal definition. Its intent is certainly

⁴⁶One may see Eeva Martikainen, "Die Lehre und die Anwesenheit Gottes in der Theologie Luthers," in *Luther und Theosis*, Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg, Band 16 (Erlangen: Martin-Luther Verlag, 1990), 215-232; and Eeva Martikainen, *Doctrina: Studien zu Luthers Begriff der Lehre*, Schriften der Luther Agricola-Gesellschaft, Band 26 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1992).

⁴⁷"*In ipsa*," 16.

⁴⁸FC SD III:67, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, edited by Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 551. References to this source will be abbreviated "Tappert."

correct, but as a form of words it is neither taught by the Formula, nor does it belong to the *status controversiae*, the point at issue, in the Osiandrian dispute.

In FC III one looks in vain for a dogmatic contrast between “inside” and “outside.” That is not the issue. Rather, it is whether Christ is our righteousness only according to His divine nature (Osiander), or only according to the human (Stancarus), or according to both. The Formula of course settles the matter in the third sense:

Against both parties the other teachers of the Augsburg Confession held unanimously that Christ is our righteousness, not according to the divine nature alone or according to the human nature alone but according to both natures; as God and man he has by his perfect obedience redeemed us from our sins, justified and saved us. Therefore they maintained that the righteousness of faith is forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and the fact that we are adopted as God’s children solely on account of the obedience of Christ, which, through faith alone, is reckoned by pure grace to all true believers as righteousness, and that they are absolved from all their unrighteousness because of this obedience.⁴⁹

At first sight it does indeed appear as though the Formula excluded Christ’s indwelling from justification.⁵⁰ A careful reading of the two relevant formulations, however, shows that only the Osiandrian justification-by-indwelling-essential-righteousness is rejected. The question is whether Christ is present or absent in justifying faith—and where would He be? Perhaps locally confined in “heaven”?—is not at issue at all:

We must also explain correctly the discussion concerning the indwelling of God’s essential righteousness in us. On the one hand, it is true indeed that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is the

⁴⁹FC SD III:4, Tappert, 539-540.

⁵⁰Mannermaa does not assert this outright, but cautiously formulates the “problem, that the relation of ‘justification’ and ‘indwelling of God in man’ is defined [by the Formula] at least conceptually differently from the way it is defined in Luther’s theology” (“*In ipsa*,” 14). It is true of course that crisp and precise doctrinal definitions, of the sort useful in settling disputes, lack the imaginative exuberance of Luther’s preaching and teaching. But this does not mean a difference in doctrine.

eternal and essential righteousness, dwells by faith in the elect who have been justified through Christ and reconciled with God, since all Christians are temples of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who impels them to do rightly. But, on the other hand, this indwelling of God is not the righteousness of faith of which Saint Paul speaks and which he calls the righteousness of God, on account of which we are declared just before God. This indwelling follows from the preceding righteousness of faith, which is precisely the forgiveness of sins and the gracious acceptance of poor sinners on account of the obedience and merit of Christ.⁵¹

The following error is rejected and condemned: "That faith does not look solely to the obedience of Christ, but also to his divine nature in so far as it dwells and works within us, and that by such indwelling our sins are covered up in the sight of God."⁵²

What is rejected is not that in "faith itself Christ is present," but that faith looks "also to his divine nature in so far as it dwells and works in us" for justification. In other words, in so far as faith produces inner renewal or sanctification. It is a question of "*this* indwelling" or "*such* indwelling," that is, Osiander's sort of "*indwelling of God's essential righteousness*" that is rejected. Luther's *in ipsa fide Christus adest* "in faith itself Christ is present" is quite untouched by the rejection of Osiander's fancies.

The whole point of the contrast between the "in us" [*in uns, in nobis*] of FC SD III:32 and the "outside" [*ausserhalb, extra nos*] of FC SD III:55 is to safeguard the difference between the "inchoate righteousness" of renewal, love, and good works, and the "imputed [*zugerechnet, imputatam*] righteousness," by which latter alone we are justified and saved. "In us" and "for us" have become shorthand for the inchoate and the imputed righteousness respectively. The first is renewal or sanctification, but the second defines, constitutes, and alone is justification. Insistence on "faith alone" is necessary to keep these two quite different things from being mixed and muddled together:

That faith's sole office and property is to serve as the only and exclusive means and instrument with and through which we receive,

⁵¹FC SD III:54, Tappert, 548-549.

⁵²FC SD III:63, Tappert, 550.

grasp, accept, apply to ourselves, and appropriate the grace and the merit of Christ in the promise of the gospel. From this office and property of application and appropriation we must exclude love and every other virtue or work.⁵³

But is it possible to “receive, grasp, accept, apply to ourselves, and appropriate” Christ’s merit apart from His person? Mannermaa is quite right about Luther not separating “the person (*persona*) and the work (*officium*) of Christ from one another.”⁵⁴ He is mistaken, however, if he suggests thereby that the Formula does so. In fact Article III states: “Our righteousness rests neither upon his divine nature nor upon his human nature but upon the entire person of Christ, who as God and man in his sole, total, and perfect obedience is our righteousness.”⁵⁵ And “Faith thus looks at the person of Christ, how this person was placed under the law for us, bore our sin, and in his path to the Father rendered to his Father entire, perfect obedience from his holy birth to his death in the stead of us poor sinners.”⁵⁶

The antithesis is always Osiander, with his fatal confusions, not Luther’s wonderful realism about Christ and faith. And of course, even though Christ is “in” justifying faith, and that faith is obviously “in” us, yet it takes us “beyond”⁵⁷ and hence outside ourselves (*extra nos*), so that our “life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

The central issue is whether justification is the forgiveness of sins—with everything else coming after (logically, not temporally)—or whether it is also the internal renewal. Imputation or transformation—that is and remains the watershed question. The received wisdom is that Luther cheerfully brewed and stewed the two together, and that the insistence on a clear demarcation between them came later, for example with the “purely forensic” view of the Formula of Concord. It is simply not true, as Alister McGrath claims in his impressively comprehensive and valuable opus, *Iustitia Dei*, that “Luther and Augustine concur in understanding justification as an all-embracing process, subsuming the beginning, development and subsequent perfection of the Christian

⁵³FC SD III:38, Tappert, 546.

⁵⁴“*In ipsa*,” 15.

⁵⁵FC SD III:55, Tappert, 549.

⁵⁶FC SD III:58, Tappert, 550.

⁵⁷“*supra*,” LW 31:371.

life."⁵⁸ Small wonder then that he can conclude that "Luther's concept of justification, his concept of the presence of Christ within the believer, his doctrine of double predestination, his doctrine of *servum arbitrium*—all were rejected or radically modified by those who followed him."⁵⁹

Given this climate of scholarly opinion, it is disappointing to find Mannermaa saying: "The subdivision into justification and sanctification, which established itself within later Lutheranism, is as such no central distinction in the theology of Luther."⁶⁰ As an illustration of Luther's "not purely forensic" understanding, Mannermaa cites the sentence: "To take hold of the Son and to believe in Him with the heart as the gift of God causes [*hoc facit*] God to reckon that faith, however imperfect it may be, as perfect righteousness."⁶¹ The sentence has been over-interpreted. Clearly all Luther means is that faith is, by God's own arrangement, the instrumental or receiving cause of justification. When by faith we embrace the promise, "this brings it about" (*hoc facit*) that faith is given what it believes.

More plausible is Mannermaa's citation of Luther's sentence: "Hence faith begins righteousness, but imputation perfects it [*fides . . . incipit, reputatio perficit*] until the day of Christ."⁶² Taken on its own it appears quite strange. The context, however, leaves no doubt about Luther's real intent. As in his explanation of the First Commandment, Luther stresses the glorious nature of faith as "the supreme allegiance, the supreme obedience, and the supreme sacrifice," because it attributes "to Him His glory and His divinity."⁶³ Luther is singing the praises of faith, in deliberate opposition to the scholastic notion of faith as a dead, cerebral specter, which needs something else, namely love, to make it come alive and amount to something before God. Then, of course, he has to conclude that even this precious, glorious faith is only weak and embattled in us, hence needing the gift of the total imputation of Christ's merit. This whole discussion must be understood therefore within the brackets of the

⁵⁸ Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2 volumes (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2:18.

⁵⁹ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2:32.

⁶⁰ "In ipsa," 56.

⁶¹ LW 26:234; WA 40 1:371.

⁶² LW 26:230; WA 40 1:364.

⁶³ LW 26:226-227.

dignity of real faith versus the scholastic trivialization. But this does not mean that the inherent renewal of faith and all its fruits is in principle prior, and imputation secondary.

The absolute priority of imputation and its exclusive sway in justification is clear, for instance, from Luther's comment on Galatians 5:16, which Mannermaa also cites: "Shaded and protected by this covering, this heaven of the forgiveness of sins and this mercy seat, we begin to love and to keep the Law. As long as we live, we are not justified or accepted by God on account of this keeping of the Law."⁶⁴

The difference in terminology between Luther and the Formula should not seduce us into the optical illusion of a difference in doctrine. Luther insists just as rigidly, as does the Formula, on a radical differentiation between imputed and inchoate righteousness, only his terms for this are "passive" and "active" righteousness. Luther devotes a whole introductory section to this topic, under the title, "The Argument of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians."⁶⁵ The distinctively "Christian righteousness," by which alone we are justified and saved, "is heavenly and passive," that is, Christ's.⁶⁶ All the various forms of earthly, active righteousness are excluded from this.

The Formula of Concord teaches and intends nothing else. In a sense even the Formula goes beyond the purely forensic, when it includes faith itself as one of the "only essential and necessary elements of justification," together with the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and the promise of the gospel.⁶⁷ This is why the Formula must allow "regeneration" and "vivification," in the strictly limited sense of the creation of justifying faith, as synonyms of justification.⁶⁸

Luther's sublime comment on Psalm 5:2-3 provides a suitable conclusion:

By the reign of His humanity or (as the Apostle says) His flesh, which takes place in faith, He conforms us to Himself and crucibles us, making genuine men, that is wretches and sinners, out of

⁶⁴LW 27:64; WA 40 11:80. Cited in "*In ipsa*," 74.

⁶⁵LW 26:4-12.

⁶⁶LW 26:8.

⁶⁷FC SD III:25, Tappert, 543; one may compare Apology IV:53, Tappert, 114.

⁶⁸FC SD III:19-20, Tappert, 542.

unhappy and haughty gods. For because we rose in Adam towards the likeness of God, He came down into our likeness, in order to lead us back to a knowledge of ourselves. And this takes place in the mystery [*sacramentum*] of the Incarnation. This is the reign of faith, in which the Cross of Christ holds sway, throwing down a divinity perversely sought and calling back a humanity [with its] despised weakness of the flesh, which had been perversely abandoned. But by the reign of [His] divinity and glory He will conform [*configurabit*] us to the body of His glory, that we might be like Him, now neither sinners nor weak, neither led nor ruled, but ourselves kings and sons of God like the angels. Then will be said in fact "my God," which is now said in hope. For it is not unfitting that he says first "my King" and then "my God," just as Thomas the Apostle, in the last chapter of Saint John, says, "My Lord and my God." For Christ must be grasped first as Man and then as God, and the Cross of His humanity must be sought before the glory of His divinity. Once we have got Christ the Man, He will bring along Christ the God of His Own accord.⁶⁹

⁶⁹*Operationes in Psalmos* (1519-1521), WA 5:128-129. I am indebted for this reference to Walter Mostert, "Martin Luther—Wirkung und Deutung," in *Luther im Widerstreit der Geschichte*, Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg, Band 20 (Erlangen: Martin-Luther Verlag, 1993), 78.

The Doctrine of Justification and Christology

Chapter A, Section One of *The Christ Present in Faith*

Tuomo Mannermaa

Translated by Thomas F. Obersat

I. The Doctrine of Justification and Christology

A. The Foundation of Justifying Faith in the Ancient Church's Christology

1. Christ as "the greatest sinner" (*maximus peccator*)

Luther's view of the Christian faith rests on the Christological thought of the early church in which Luther, however, incorporates a specific accent. Luther understood the common early church incarnational thought in such a way that the incarnation fits seamlessly into the doctrine of justification. The eternally begotten second person of the Trinity, the Logos, "didn't consider it robbery" (Paul), to be in the form of God (*in forma dei*), rather out of sheer love took the "form of a servant" (*forma servi*), in which He became man. The Word of God according to Luther had by all means not only taken on [assumed] a "neutral" human nature as such, but the pronounced human nature of the sinner. This means that Christ truly has and carries the sins of all men in His assumed human nature. Christ is the greatest of all sinners (*maximus peccator, peccator peccatorum*). The Reformer says:

And all the prophets saw this, that Christ was to become the greatest thief, murderer, adulterer, robber, desecrator, blasphemer, etc., there has ever been anywhere in the world. He is not acting in His own person now. Now He is not the Son of God, born of the Virgin. But He is a sinner, who has

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and bears the sin of Paul, the former blasphemer, persecutor, and assaulter; of Peter, who denied Christ; of David, who was an adulterer and a murderer, and who caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord (Romans 2:24). In short, He has and bears all the sins of all men in His body—not in the sense that He has committed them but in the sense that He took these sins, committed by us, upon His own body, in order to make satisfaction for them with His own blood.¹

The text of the lecture notes (Hs) goes beyond the printed text (Dr). From this position emerges how real Luther thinks the union of Christ with the sinner is. The Logos communicates with the human nature of the “thief and the sinner” and is downright “submerged” in it. “And so He is looked upon as one who is among robbers although innocent; the more, where He out of His own and the Father’s free will wanted to unite with the body and blood of all those who were robbers and sinners. Therefore He is submerged in all.”²

The characteristic of Luther’s incarnational theology is contained exactly in the thought that Christ became a sinful man and that He, in His assumed human nature, is really the greatest sinner. The Reformer knows about the strangeness of this thought advanced by him, and therefore defends his view many times.

“But it is highly absurd and insulting to call the Son of God a sinner and a curse!” If you want to deny that He is a sinner and a curse, then deny also that He suffered, was crucified, and died. For it is no less absurd to say, as our Creed confesses and prays, that the Son of God was crucified and underwent the torments of sin and death than it is to say that He is a sinner or a curse. But if it is not absurd to confess and believe that Christ was crucified among thieves, then it is not absurd to say as well that He was a curse and a sinner of sinners. . . . [Isaiah chapter 52] Isaiah 53:6 speaks the same way about Christ. It

¹LW 26:277; WA 40 I:433, 26-434, 12 (Dr).

²WA 40 I:434, 1-4 (Hs); comparative from LW 26:278: “Christ was not only found among sinners; but of His own free will and by the will of the Father He wanted to be an associate of sinners, having assumed the flesh and blood of those who were sinners and thieves and who were immersed in all sorts of sin.”

says: "God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." These words must not be diluted but must be left in their precise and serious sense. For God is not joking in the words of the prophet; He is speaking seriously and out of great love, namely, that this Lamb of God, Christ, should bear the iniquity of us all. But what does it mean to "bear"? The sophists reply: "To be punished." Good. But why is Christ punished? Is it not because He has sin and bears sin? That Christ has sin is the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the Psalms. Thus in [Psalm 39] Psalm 40:12 we read: "My iniquities have overtaken Me"; in [Psalm 40] Psalm 41:4: "I said: 'O Lord, be gracious to Me; heal Me, for I have sinned against Thee!'" ; and in [Psalm 68] Psalm 69:5: "O God, Thou knowest My folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from Thee." In these psalms the Holy Spirit is speaking in the Person of Christ and testifying in clear words that He has sinned or has sins. These testimonies of the Psalms are not the words of an innocent one; they are the words of the suffering Christ, who undertook to bear the person of all sinners and therefore was made guilty of the sins of the entire world.³

2. Christ as "the greatest person" (*maxima persona*) and "the sole sinner" (*solus peccator*)

In the view that Christ is "the chief of sinners" [der allergrößte Sünder], the central presupposition for Luther's incarnational theology and soteriology comes to light, according to which Christ is, as it were, the "collective person," or rather, as the Reformer himself says, "the greatest person" (*maxima persona*) who unites the persons of all men really in Himself. Christ becomes the sinner in each person.

This is the most joyous of all doctrines and the one that contains the most comfort. It teaches that we have the indescribable and inestimable mercy and love of God. When the merciful Father saw that we were being oppressed through the Law, that we were being held under a curse, and that we could not be liberated from it by anything, He sent His Son into the World, heaped all the sins of all men upon Him, and

³LW 26:278-279; WA 40 I:434, 29-36; 435, 21-436, 16 (Dr).

said to Him: "Be Peter the denier; Paul the persecutor, blasphemer, and assaulter; David the adulterer; the sinner who ate the apple in Paradise; the thief on the cross. In short, be the person of all men, the one who has committed the sins of all men. And see to it that You pay and make satisfaction for them."⁴

The thought of Christ as "the greatest person" (*maxima persona*) culminates in the statement about Christ as the "sole sinner" (*solus peccator*). After the incarnation of the Logos there is nowhere else more sin as in His person. Christ is "drowned" (*submersus*) in all sins and all sins are submerged in Christ. This thought forms the starting point for Luther's soteriology. Without going deeper into the details of the soteriology, which is not as yet satisfactorily examined, its goal should be described briefly.

Because Christ as man is at the same time "the chief of sinners" and in His being as Logos is at the same time God, or rather, is "absolute righteousness and life," His person stands in an extreme and far-reaching tension and disunion. According to His divine nature, Christ is "divine Power, Righteousness, Blessing, Grace and Life."⁵ These divine attributes fight against other culminating powers of destruction, sin, curse, death in His person and conquer them. Thus there is no longer any sort of sin, death or condemnation because, in Christ, "all sin is collected together" in Christ, and He remains the "sole sinner." It should be pointed out, that the defeat of the powers of destruction decidedly takes place in Christ's own person. He has won "in Himself" (*triumphans in seipso*) the struggle between righteousness and sin. Sin, curse, and death are emphatically first conquered in the person of Christ, and "after that" shall the whole world be changed through His person.⁶ Salvation is participation in the person of Christ.

⁴LW 26:280; WA 40 I:437, 18-27 (Dr). See also Luther's Choral, "Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gmein" (EKG 239) WA 35:422-425; "Dear Christians, Let Us Now Rejoice," LW 53:217-220.

⁵LW 26:282; WA 40 I:440, 21, "divina virtus, iustitia, benedictio, gratia et vita."

⁶LW 26:282; WA 40 I:440, 26-30.

3. Faith as participation in the person of Christ

In accordance with the structured idea of Luther's theology, the man in faith truly has the person of Christ and in faith partakes of divine life and victory. On the other hand, it can be said, through faith Christ gives to man His person. Faith means participation in Christ in whom there is no sin, death, or condemnation.

To the extent that Christ rules by His grace in the hearts of the faithful, there is no sin or death or curse. But where Christ is not known, there these things remain. And so all who do not believe lack this blessing and victory. "For this," as John says, "is our victory, faith" (1 John 5:4).⁷

According to Luther faith is therefore victory, because faith unites the faithful with Christ's person; the person of Christ is Himself the victory.

To the Reformer, justifying faith does not exclusively mean the reception of imputed forgiveness of sins on the basis of Christ's merit. The Formula of Concord places special importance on the emphasis of this fact. Real participation in Christ means faith participation in the accomplished institution in Christ of "blessing, righteousness, and life." Christ is Himself life, righteousness, and blessing, because God is all of these "*naturaliter et substantialiter*."⁸ Justifying faith means then, participation in God's essence in Christ.

The core of this understanding of participation comes to effect in Luther's concept of the "joyful exchange." According to this, Christ Himself takes on the sinful person of man and gives to him His own righteous person. An exchange of attributes (a sort of *communicatio idiomatum*) therefore occurs between Christ and the faithful: Christ, as divine righteousness, truth, peace, joy, love, strength, and life gives Himself to the faithful. At the same time Christ "absorbs" the sin, death, and condemnation of the faithful.⁹ In the real participation in Christ the Christian has no more sin and death. In scholastic theology, according to the Reformer, an exactly

⁷LW 26:282; WA 40 I:440, 31-35.

⁸LW 26:282; WA 40 I:441, 19-28.

⁹LW 25:331-332; WA 56:343, 16-21.

opposite way of thinking is typical: there sin forms there a substance, a quality belonging to the human nature. On the other hand, "true theology" now teaches that "there is no more sin in the world" for all sin is "collected in Christ," and He has overcome all sin in His own person. Therefore wherever man is united in faith with Christ, there sin has truly been annihilated. Luther says:

Now that Christ reigns there is in fact no more sin, death, or curse — this we confess every day in the Apostles' Creed when we say: "I believe in the holy church." This is plainly nothing else than if we were to say: "I believe that there is no sin and no death in the church. For believers in Christ are not sinners and are not sentenced to death but are altogether holy and righteous, lords over sin and death who live eternally." But it is faith alone that discerns this, because we say: "I believe in the holy church." If you consult your reason and your eyes, you will judge differently. For in devout people you will see many things that offend you. You will see them fall now and again, see them sin, or be weak in faith, or be troubled by a bad temper, envy, or other evil emotions. "Therefore the church is not holy." I deny the conclusion that you draw. If I look at my own person or at that of my neighbor, the church will never be holy. But if I look at Christ, who is the Propitiator and Cleanser of the church, then it is completely holy; for He bore the sins of the entire world.

Therefore where sins are noticed and felt, there they really are not present. For, according to the theology of Paul, there is no more sin, no more death, and no more curse in the world, but only in Christ, who is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, and who became a curse in order to set us free from the curse. On the other hand, according to philosophy and reason, sin, death, etc., are not present anywhere except in the world, in the flesh, and in sinners. For the theology of the sophists is unable to consider sin any other way except metaphysically, that is: "A quality clings to a substance or a subject. Therefore just as color clings to a wall, so sin clings to the world, to the flesh, or to the conscience. Therefore it must be washed away by some opposing motivation, namely, by love." But the true theology teaches

that there is no more sin in the world, because Christ, on whom, according to Isaiah 53:6, the Father has laid the sins of the entire world, has conquered, destroyed, and killed it in His own body. Having died to sin once, He has truly been raised from the dead and will not die any more (Romans 6:9). Therefore wherever there is faith in Christ, there sin has in fact been abolished, put to death, and buried. But where there is no faith in Christ, there sin remains.¹⁰

Since faith means real union with Christ's person, Luther's concept of faith is immediately christologically anchored. Christ and faith belong "essentially" [*wesensmäßig*] together. On account of this it is understandable that Luther connects to the Christology of the early church, according to which the divine nature of Christ has the same essence as God the Father. Therefore Luther bases his critique of Arius directly on the concept of justifying faith. The train of thought is as follows: God is by His "nature and substance" (*naturaliter et substantialiter*) righteousness, blessing, and life.¹¹ Christ can in Himself conquer sin, curse, and death only if He in Himself is righteousness, blessing, and life. In other words, that He is essentially [*wesensmäßig*] God. In connection with the declaration that the believer who is united with Christ has no more sin, condemnation, and death follows the combination of thoughts concerning the divinity of Christ with the righteousness of faith in Luther's writing:

These are the chief pieces of our theology, which are being darkened by the scholastic theologians. And here you can see how necessary the article of faith is: (I believe in) the Son of God, the Christ. As Arius puts the article of faith in question, he is forced off the article of redemption. For the "conquering of sin in itself" belongs together, that it is called "man"; therefore He must be true God. For, to destroy the Law, death, and wrath, [it takes divine might]; to give life in itself must be done by divinity. Thus to destroy and create are the attributes of divine majesty. Therefore the Scriptures say that He destroys death and sin in Himself and has given life. Whoever denies

¹⁰LW 26:285-86; WA 40 I:444, 30-445, 34.

¹¹LW 26:282; WA 40 I:441, 25-27.

the divinity of Christ loses the whole Christ-being and becomes a Turk. Therefore I have often said: Please learn the article of justification well! As long as we teach that we are justified through Christ we must show that Christ is the true Son of God. These are our speculations, which by all means are useful and keep an upperhand against work righteousness.¹²

Since faith means real union with Christ and because in Christ the Logos is identical with God, it follows that the believer also participates really in God's essence. This is meant especially whenever Luther speaks of Christ as "gift." Christ is not only God's favor (*favor*), that is, forgiveness, but He is also really the "gift" (*donum*).

4. Christ as gift (*donum*)

Luther's theology is entirely permeated with the thought that Christ is at the same time both God's favor (*favor*) as well as gift (*donum*). Favor means the removal of the wrath and absolution. It concerns the "subject" of God and His attitude toward men. Christ

¹²WA 40 I:441, 1-12 (Hs); comparative from LW 26:282-283: "This is the chief doctrine of the Christian faith. The sophists have completely obliterated it, and today the fanatics are obscuring it once more. Here you see how necessary it is to believe and confess the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. When Arius denied this, it was necessary also for him to deny the doctrine of redemption. For to conquer the sin of the world, death, the curse, and the wrath of God in Himself—this is the work, not of any creature but of the divine power. Therefore it was necessary that He who was to conquer these in Himself should be true God by nature. For in opposition to this mighty power—sin, death, and the curse—which of itself reigns in the whole world and in the entire creation, it is necessary to set an even higher power, which cannot be found and does not exist apart from the divine power. Therefore to abolish sin, to destroy death, to remove the curse in Himself, to grant righteousness, to bring life to light (2 Timothy 1:10), and to bring the blessing in Himself, that is, to annihilate these things and to create those— all these are works solely of the divine power. Since Scripture attributes all these to Christ, therefore He Himself is Life, Righteousness, and Blessing, that is, God by nature and in essence. Hence those who deny the divinity of Christ lose all Christianity and become Gentiles and Turks through and through.

"As I often warn, therefore, the doctrine of justification must be learned diligently. For in it are included all the other doctrines of our faith; and if it is sound, all the others are sound as well. Therefore when we teach that men are justified through Christ and that Christ is the Victor over sin, death, and the eternal curse, we are testifying at the same time that He is God by nature."

as "gift" again means that God gives Himself really to man. In faith, Christ is with all His attributes—such as righteousness, blessing, life, power, peace, and so forth—really present. The thought of Christ as "gift" means, therefore, that the believing subject partakes in the "divine nature." The Reformer frequently cites the same passage of 2 Peter (1:4), upon which also rests the patristic doctrine of *Theopoiesis*.¹³

The thought of Christ as gift is developed by Luther especially in his famous writing against Latomus. Although in the Galatians commentary (WA 40), the differentiation of "gift" and "favor" is not thematically executed, the distinction itself and theme of "gift" is obvious throughout. Likewise the following quote demonstrates both the view of Christ as gift as well as the Reformer's "realistic" understanding of the relationship between Christ and faith. The Christian "is greater than the world," because the gift of Christ found in his heart "rises above the world."

Therefore a Christian, properly defined, is free of all laws and is subject to nothing, internally or externally. But I purposely said, "to the extent that he is a Christian" (not "to the extent that he is a man or a woman"); that is, to the extent that he has his conscience trained, adorned, and enriched by this faith, this great and inestimable treasure, or, as Paul calls it, "this inexpressible gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15), which cannot be exalted and praised enough, since it makes men sons and heirs of God. Thus a Christian is greater than the entire world. For in his heart he has this seemingly small gift; yet the smallness of this gift and treasure, which he holds in faith, is greater than heaven and earth, because Christ, who is this gift, is greater.¹⁴

This text shows how real Luther considers the "gift," that is, the presence of Christ. Several appropriate passages are found in the Galatians commentary (1531-1535). In the following, one sermon of the so-called *Kirchenpostille* (Church Homilies) is cited, in which the thoughts of "favor," "gift" and the "participation in the divine nature" are especially clearly expressed.

¹³One may see, for example, LW 26:100; WA 40 I:182, 15.

¹⁴LW 26:134; WA 40 I:235, 26-236, 16 (Dr).

This is truly a striking, beautiful and (as St. Peter says in 2 Peter 1) the dearest and the greatest of all promises, given to us poor miserable sinners, that we also are to take part in divine nature and be so highly ennobled, that we are not only to be loved by God through Christ—to have his favor and grace as the highest and dearest holiness—but to have the Lord Himself abide in us. Then it shall be (as he says) that we not only remain in His love and that He takes from us His wrath and offers to us a gracious Fatherly heart, but that we should enjoy the same love (otherwise it would be wasted, “lost love” as the saying goes, to love and not enjoy, etc.) and have great benefit and treasure from it, and such love proves itself in deeds and great gifts.¹⁵

Christ is thus, in addition to “favor” (forgiveness of sins), also “gift.” In other words, the presence of Christ means that the believer takes part in the “divine nature.” As the Christian participates in the essence of God, he receives anew a part of the attributes of His essence.

5. Faith and the *communicatio idiomatum*

The thought that the Christian takes part in the “divine nature” means that he is “filled with all of God’s abundance.” God’s righteousness makes the Christian righteous; God’s “life lives in him”; God’s love induces man to love, and so on. Luther uses diverse expressions for this occurrence, such as “the joyful exchange.” The truly appropriate expression is “the communication of attributes” (*communicatio idiomatum*), which is seldom used by the Reformer, but explains his fundamental idea well. The *communicatio idiomatum* in its relation to the *inhabitatio Christi*, clearly takes effect in the following quote:

And we are so filled “with all kinds of God’s fullness,” that is so much spoken of in the Hebrew manner: that we are filled in all manner, that He makes full and we become full of God, overwhelmed with all gifts and grace, and filled with His

¹⁵Crucigers Sommerpostille (1544), WA 21:458, 11-22. See also Tuomo Mannermaa, “Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research,” translated by Norman M. Watt, *Pro Ecclesia* IV (Winter 1995): 46, for a comparative partial translation.

Spirit, which makes us brave and illuminates us with His light, and His life lives in us, His blessedness makes us blessed, His love in us awakens love, in short, that all that He is and can do in us becomes total and works powerfully. . . .¹⁶

Faith imparts to man divine attributes, because in faith Christ Himself as the divine person is present. In faith is also given the entire "goodness" (*bona*) of God. It is quite evident, that in Luther's theology—as was shown earlier—the concept of justifying faith and of the dwelling of Christ in faith are not to be separated from each other. Justification means not only the crediting of Christ's merit to the sinner, to which, as a factor detached from it, the *inhabitatio Dei* might possibly follow afterwards. Justification and communication of attributes form in Luther's theology expressions and different aspects of one and the same thing. This is especially evident based on the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*. The Christ present in justifying faith communicates in the "joyful exchange" the redeeming attributes of God to the believer. God is righteousness—in faith man is granted righteousness; God is joy—in faith one takes part in joy; God is life—in faith one has a part in life; God is strength—in faith one takes part in strength, etc.

The concept of the real participation of the faithful in the "divine nature" in Christ and the connected doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* reveals how vitally and inseparably the Reformer's theology of faith is based on the real-ontic (*real-ontischen*) Christology of the early church. The early church soteriology, together with its *theopoiesis*-thinking, indeed, comes to fruition in the theology of the Reformer on the basis of the doctrine of justification. So the particular imprint of Luther's theology of faith becomes evident based on the examination of it, as he criticizes the scholastic soteriology. The scholastic view was summarized in the formula "*fides charitate formata*." On this point the Reformer places—as one perhaps can express it plainly—his own program, "*fides Christo formata*."

B. *Fides charitate formata—fides Christo formata*

¹⁶Sermon of 1525, WA 17 I:438, 14-28. One may also see Watt, 47, for a comparative translation.

1. The program of *fides charitate formata* criticized by Luther

a. Intellect—love

In Luther's view participation in divine life in Christ takes place, as shown, in faith. For an analysis of the Reformer's view of faith, an investigation of how he criticized the scholastic lines of thought familiar to him is helpful.¹⁷ According to the view especially criticized by Luther, faith is something belonging to the realm of the intellect, although [having only] logically uncertain proof of such objects, which stand outside the range of rational knowledge. Also in this view the intellect obtains its knowledge through assimilation of the so-called intelligible element (*species intelligibilis*) inherent in the object of knowledge. This element becomes its own actualization [*Seinswirklichkeit*] of the subject. Therefore, the presupposition of the origin of knowledge is that the subject and the object become one (*idem est intellectus et intellectum*).

This doctrine of knowledge has considerable influence on the view of faith. On the road of knowledge, God is unreachable, otherwise man and God would become one. Therefore, faith, which—as stated—belongs to the realm of the intellect, cannot be the essential organ of the God-relation [*Gottes-Verhältnisses*]. Intellect joins to the form of the recognizable (*species intelligibilis*), and this is, with respect to the recognition of God, simply impossible.

The relation of God can nevertheless emerge with the help of the basic human tendency (*tendentia*), of the will, of the *e-motio* [sic], that is, love. Love, according to the common scholastic view is the desiring of an object. Love is, in a sense, "blind" movement towards its object. Love reaches the object, and consequently love touches the object, without assimilating the object to itself. Love is in its innermost being movement toward the transcendence, toward the infinite being, that is, toward God. In as much as this movement is pardoned (*gratia*

¹⁷The following representation rests primarily on Luther's interpretation of Galatians 2:16, which contains an extensive critique on scholastic theology.

infusa), and love, by the movement, receives the strength [*Kraft*] of grace, "love reaches" and "rises to" the Triune God.

The vital point in this way of thinking is that man is brought pronouncedly to unification with God through love lifted up through grace. Faith itself is an inadequate organ for the relationship with God [*Gottesverhältnis*]. Faith mediates imperfect knowledge of this, upon which love rests, but faith is "dead" and "lifeless" without the love lifted up and inspired by grace.

b. Faith as matter and love as form

In the scholastic view criticized by Luther the relationship between faith and love was defined with metaphysical concepts, so that faith is the material cause (*materia, der Stoff*), and love, on the other hand, is the formal cause (*forma, die Gestalt*). The love inspired by grace is the *forma*, that is, the divine actualization [*Seinswirklichkeit*], which gives faith form, which thus informs faith. Since love bestows reality upon faith, faith transforms itself from dead knowledge to living, active, and—as one also said—"colored" recognition. The totality [*Inbegriff*] of this view of justification crystallizes in a single slogan: faith informed by love (*fides charitate formata*), that is, faith brought to divine reality through love. Through the infused love, man's love changes from false love of the world to love of God. With it, he can find the right order [*ordnung*] of love, can be freed of the false love of the world and do appropriate works out of love of God, by means of which he can be saved and reach God.

c. Love as "substance" and grace as "accident"

Luther criticizes the described view of faith vehemently. The pinnacle of his critique is that in the program of the *fides charitate formata* the relationship between faith and love is improperly defined. It is of special significance for the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue that the Reformer does not criticize the scholastic view primarily only because the grace therein is understood as an actualization [*Seinswirklichkeit*] (*forma*) received into the being of man. Also according to Luther the righteousness present in faith, that is, Christ, is in

man. Luther also describes the righteousness of faith as formal righteousness (*formalis iustitia*), that is, as real, based on the actualization [*Seinswirklichkeit*] of received righteousness.¹⁸ The point of the Reformer's critique lies in that, according to the scholastic doctrine, abstract love is the essential reality of salvation. Thus the love quickened and deified by grace remains in this context, namely, man's love.

The critique of the Reformer means that he does not approve of the view that is connected with the scholastic solution, namely that grace should be a disposition [*Habitus*] combined with the substance of man, that is, an accident, or a qualitative entity (*qualitas inhaerens*).¹⁹

Since grace is only "accident," which gives of the substance, that is, of the new quality of the self-existing love of man, what really remains and gives a foundation in the relationship with God [*Gottesverhältnis*] is man's own love. Grace is—as said—a quality, which stands in the inherent relation to this substance, that is, to the self-existing love of man itself. The pinnacle of Luther's theology of faith is directed against this view. Grace is, one could say, no "accident." Rather grace has a pronounced "substance" character. In other words, grace is God Himself in Christ. This reality has being in itself and not in any other. The Christ really present in faith is completely the real actualization [*Seinswirklichkeit*] of His own righteousness, that is, love. This righteousness however retains its "substance" character. In other words, the *formalis iustitia* is Christ Himself,²⁰ who also, as the one present in man, remains that which He essentially is, namely God's own righteousness and love, of which man cannot boast.

The character of grace as "in itself" comes to effect in Luther's often repeated thoughts that faith is a "living," "powerful," and "busy" thing, which does not rest in the soul as "the color on an object." The thought standing behind these

¹⁸One may see, for example, WA 40 I:229, 2; LW 26:130.

¹⁹LW 26:129; WA 40 I:228, 12-13.

²⁰LW 26:130; WA 40 I:229, 918-21.

typical pictures can be expressed by saying that grace in essence is not “accidental” but “substantial” reality.

d. Love as law

Still a further aspect is joined to Luther’s already described criticism of the scholastic doctrine of grace, as its essential dimension. Proceeding from this assumption—that in this life the fundamental organ for salvation is the love lifted up directly from grace—must the whole relationship with God inevitably be considered within the bounds commanded by the law [according to the Reformer].²¹ Love as man’s own reality remains a human endeavor and movement towards God. That is why love belongs in the realm of the law.

Love as the way of salvation is impossible because, in the consideration of man before God (*coram deo*) Christ is the only righteousness. The place of the law lies in the old sinful man.

2. “*Fides Christo formata*”

a. Christ as the form of faith (*Christus forma fidei*)

Luther’s critique of scholastic soteriology can be summarized as follows: The righteousness in man is always “alien righteousness,” although this alien reality is a reality (*formalis iustitia*) controlled substantially [*real*] by the being of man and united with it. “Alien” is not the uplifted love of man, but rather Christ Himself and His true presence.

This criticism on the program of *fides charitate formata* forms at the same time the core of Luther’s Reformation criticism and states that not the love, but Christ Himself, is the form of faith. Luther, then, also uses the motto: *Christus forma fidei*.²² The difference between the Lutheran and the scholastic view lies, according to Luther’s perspective, exactly in that the scholastics teach *fides charitate formata*, while the doctrine of the Reformer,

²¹[LW 26:127-128]; WA 40 I:226, 14-19.

²²[LW 26:129-130]; WA 40 I:229, 9.

on the contrary, advances the formula *fides Christo formata*.²³ Faith has the divine reality of being, that is, *forma*. This divine actualization [*Seinswirklichkeit*] is the Christ present in faith. He is the only way of salvation.

b. "Faith justifies thusly, that it grasps and possesses this treasure, namely the present Christ."

Luther's conception of faith is not correctly understood if one thinks Christ is merely the object of faith, just as any kind of object is the object of human knowledge. The object of faith is His present person and with that is essentially also "subject." Luther says that Christ is the object of faith, and, indeed, not only the object, but "in faith itself Christ is present" (*in ipsa fide Christus adest*). Faith is a knowledge "which sees nothing." Therefore faith resembles, according to the description of the Reformer, the righteous [*waltenden*] cloud in the Holy of Holies of the Old Testament temple, in which God wanted to live (one may see 1 Kings 8:12, [KJV], "Then spake Solomon: The Lord said He would dwell in the darkness"). Especially in the darkness built by faith Christ sits upon His throne in His complete reality and rules equally with God in the dusk and in the cloud of the Holy of Holies. The following is a guiding quotation of Luther's theology of faith in which the Reformer crystallizes his thought of "*Christus forma fidei*":

But where they speak of love, we speak of faith. And while they say that faith is the mere outline [*μονόγραμμα*] but love is its living colors and completion, we say in opposition that faith takes hold of Christ and that He is the form that adorns and informs faith as color does the wall. Therefore Christian faith is not an idle quality or an empty husk in the heart, which may exist in a state of mortal sin until love comes along to make it alive. But if it is true

²³This expression is used, for example, by Heiko A. Oberman, "'Iustitia Christi' and 'Iustitia Dei': Luther and the Scholastic Doctrines of Justification," *Harvard Theological Review* 59 (1966): 20 and following. Translator's note: Mannermaa references Oberman as it is found in *Der Durchbruch der reformatorischen Erkenntnis bei Luther*, edited by Bernhard Lohse, (Darmstadt, 1968): 423. In the edition used in translation, it appears that Mannermaa is referencing pages 436 and following.

faith, it is a sure trust and firm acceptance in the heart. It takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object but, so to speak, the One who is present in the faith itself. Thus faith is a sort of knowledge or darkness that nothing can see. Yet the Christ of whom faith takes hold is sitting in this darkness as God sat in the midst of darkness on Sinai and in the temple. Therefore our "formal righteousness" is not a love that informs faith; but it is faith itself, a cloud in our hearts, that is, trust in a thing we do not see, in Christ, who is present especially when He cannot be seen.

Therefore faith justifies because it takes hold of and possesses this treasure, the present Christ. But how He is present—this is beyond our thought; for there is darkness, as I have said. Where the confidence of the heart is present, therefore, there Christ is present, in that very cloud and faith. This is the formal righteousness on account of which a man is justified; it is not on account of love, as the sophists say. In short, just as the sophists say that love forms and trains faith, so we say that it is Christ who forms and trains faith or who is the form of faith. Therefore the Christ who is grasped by faith and who lives in the heart is the true Christian righteousness, on account of which God counts us righteous and grants us eternal life. Here there is no work of the Law, no love; but there is an entirely different kind of righteousness, a new world above and beyond the Law. For Christ or faith is neither the Law nor the work of the Law.²⁴

This quotation shows what the Reformer means with his famous statement "Christ is the essential secret of faith." It is furthermore clear, that faith—in which faith Christ himself is present—can by no means be a "speculation" that exists "inactive or static" in the soul. A lifeless, dead and empty faith is an "absolute" faith, that is, a faith detached from Christ.²⁵

²⁴LW 26:129-130; WA 40 I:228, 27-229, 32.

²⁵For comprehension of absolute faith see Regin Prenter, "Luther's Doctrine of Salvation," edited by Vilmos Vajta, *Luther's Research Today* (Berlin, 1958), 66.

This faith is nevertheless not made alive by the *habitus* of love [*Liebeshabitus*] inspired by grace but through the present Christ. He brings the attributes of God's essence along, such as love, righteousness, strength, life, freedom—in short, God Himself, "life and salvation" [*Seligkeit*], as it is called in the Large Catechism.

The thought of the Christ present in faith allows the well-known and often-cited theological sentence contained in the preface to Romans to be completely understandable:

Faith, however, is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God, John 1[:12-13]. It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men in the heart and spirit and mind and powers; and it brings with it the Holy Spirit. O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly.²⁶

The thought already described, that in faith Christ is truly present, reveals not only the inner structure of Luther's theology of faith, but also from this the skilled criticism by the Reformer of false deification thought [*vergöttlichungsdenken*] becomes understandable.

3. "*Christus praesentissimus in nobis.*" Criticism of the false deification concept [*vergöttlichungsvorstellung*].

According to the incorrect deification concept, Christ is not really present in faith "below," but rather He is "above" in heaven. According to this view, the relationship with God is thought to be resting on the love (*eros*) in which man moves to transcendence, that is, straight to heaven where Christ is. A relationship to Christ [*Christusbeziehung*] resting on such a love is, according to Luther, always partial, a constant, unceasing movement toward transcendence which always remains "Parthenwerk." The Reformer emphasizes instead that God in the abundance of His whole being "came down" and became man. He who believes is now already really "in heaven," where in Christ God's whole

²⁶LW 35:370; WA DB 7:10, 6-10.

abundance stands complete and where Christ is truly present. Luther says:

This is the true faith of Christ and in Christ, through which we become members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones (Ephesians 5:30). Therefore in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Hence the speculation of the sectarians is vain when they imagine that Christ is present in us "spiritually," that is, speculatively, but is present really in heaven. Christ and faith must be completely joined. We must simply take our place in heaven; and Christ must be, live, and work in us. But He lives and works in us, not speculatively but really, with presence and with power.²⁷

Although Luther's criticism is directed here, above all, against the so-called spiritualists of the Reformation era, it also affects the scholastic theology. The core in this criticized view lies in the already often-mentioned fact that faith is thought of as a certain accident, that is, as a quality found in the heart, which is detached from Christ. Christ is consequently in heaven, to where one then strives in love quickened by the spirit. Concerning this thought of *fides charitate formata*, which according to Luther is common to the enthusiasts [*Spiritualisten*] and scholastics, Luther says typically:

The fanatical spirits today speak about faith in Christ in the manner of the sophists. They imagine that faith is a quality that clings to the heart apart from Christ. This is a dangerous error. Christ should be set forth in such a way that apart from Him you see nothing at all and that you believe that nothing is nearer and closer to you than He. For He is not sitting idle in heaven but is completely present with us, active and living in us as chapter two says (2:20): "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me," and here: "You have put on Christ."²⁸

Faith according to Luther is the right way to share in God, because faith possesses the whole fullness of God's being [*Wesensfülle Gottes*] in Christ. The participation in "divine life" happens decidedly in justifying faith. Therefore a clarification of

²⁷LW 26:357; WA 40 I:546, 21-28.

²⁸LW 26:356; WA 40 I:545, 24-30.

Luther's concept of faith presupposes the consideration of his view of the law. Also the Reformer's understanding of the essence and the function of the law leads to the thought of participation in "divine life."

C. Law and the participation in the "divine life"

1. The law belongs "to the world"

a. The impossibility of the law as way of salvation

To Luther's aforementioned christological view of faith belongs his view of the law, as an essential dimension and, to some extent, as an antagonistic counter point.

A first aspect of Luther's view of the law forms the unconditional exclusion of the law as a way of salvation. That means that no intentional works of love may be demanded of man so that he, because of those works, could possibly gain righteousness before God. If works of love are established as the basis of redemption, then that is the primary source [*urquell*] of the corruption of faith. God Himself wants to give as love, namely, out of His pure and sheer goodness, His merciful righteousness—that is, Himself—and to be to man "life and salvation"—also love. The law does not produce such "strong and powerful life" and does not change the human into a new creature. Faith uniquely and solely—thus, exclusively Christ—gives birth to the new man. The human who wants to attain righteousness only on account of works, plagues himself day and night, but "foolishly," because "the law brings neither advice nor refuge." The striving for redemption and peace of mind on account of works that are demanded from the law, that is, love, is a "Sisyphean task" and "Danaidenwerk." One "milks the billy goat" and "holds a sieve under" Luther says:

Anyone who wanted to grow rhetorical here could develop these words further actively, passively, and neutrally. Actively: the Law is a weak and beggarly element because it makes men weaker and more beggarly. Passively: because it does not have of itself the power and ability to grant or confer righteousness. And neutrally: of

itself it is weakness and poverty, which afflict and trouble the weak and the poor more and more all the time. Trying to be justified through the Law, therefore, is as though someone who is already weak and sick were to ask for some even greater trouble that would kill him completely but meanwhile were to say that he intends to cure his disease by this very means; or as though someone suffering from epilepsy were to catch the plague in addition; or as though a leper were to come to another leper, or a beggar to another beggar, with the aim of giving him assistance and making him rich. As the proverb says, one of these is milking a billy goat and the other is holding the sieve!²⁹

b. The burdensome and weakening work of the law upon man

Luther uses varied but strong expressions where he describes the Sisyphean character of the "righteousness of the law."

. . . namely, that trying to be justified by the Law is like counting money out of an empty purse, eating and drinking from an empty dish and cup, looking for strength and riches where there is nothing but weakness and poverty, laying a burden upon someone who is already oppressed to the point of collapse, trying to spend a hundred gold pieces and not having even a pittance, taking clothing away from a naked man, imposing even greater weakness and poverty upon someone who is sick and needy, etc.³⁰

Where Luther criticizes the law as way of salvation, his statement resounds in overtones that echo the criticism of human weakness in modern, "independent" man—although from completely different origins. The righteousness of the law makes man weak, powerless, and "womanish" [*weibisch*]. Luther's aim with his criticism points not to the "superman," but to man strengthened by the power of God's grace.

²⁹LW 26:403-404; WA 40 I:613, 23-614, 16 (Dr).

³⁰LW 26:406; WA 40 I:617, 25-30.

Therefore everyone who falls away from the promise to the Law, from faith to works, is doing nothing but imposing an unbearable yoke upon himself in his weak and beggarly condition (Acts 15:10). By doing this he becomes ten times as weak and beggarly, until he finally desponds, unless Christ comes and sets him free.

The same thing is shown by the Gospel story (Mark 5:25-26) about the woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years and had suffered much under many physicians, on whom she had spent all that she had; but she could not be cured by them but grew worse with longer care. Therefore those who perform the works of the Law with the intention of being justified through them not only do not become righteous but become twice as unrighteous; that is, as I have said, through the Law they become weaker, more beggarly, and incapable of any good work. I have experienced this both in myself and in many others. Under the papacy I saw many of the monks who performed many great works with burning zeal in order to acquire righteousness and salvation; and yet there was nobody in the world more impatient, weaker, and more miserable than they, and nothing more unbelieving, fearful, and desperate than they. Political officials, who were involved in the most important and difficult issues, were not as impatient and as womanishly weak, or as superstitious, unbelieving, and fearful as such self-righteous men.³¹

The Reformer maintains that those, who in the realm of legal regulation [*gesetzlichen Ordnung*], "want to be righteous and have life"

... fall further short of righteousness and life than do tax collectors, sinners, and harlots. These latter cannot rest on confidence in their own works, which are such that they cannot trust that they will obtain grace and the forgiveness of sins on their account. For if the righteousness and the works done according to the Law do not justify, much less

³¹LW 26:404; WA 40 I:614, 28-615, 19 (Dr).

do sins committed against the Law justify. Therefore such people are more fortunate than the self-righteous in this respect; for they lack trust in their own works, which, even if it does not completely destroy faith in Christ, nevertheless hinders it very greatly. On the other hand, the self-righteous, who refrain from sins outwardly and seem to live blameless and religious lives, cannot avoid a presumption of confidence and righteousness, which cannot coexist with faith in Christ. Therefore they are less fortunate than tax collectors and harlots, who do not offer their good works to a wrathful God in exchange for eternal life, as the self-righteous do, since they have none to offer, but beg that their sins be forgiven them for the sake of Christ.³²

2. In faith "all that is worldly and all laws end and the divine begins"

a. Law, conscience, and Christ

As shown, it is characteristic for Luther's view of the law that the law belongs only "in the world." Thus it has validity for the "old" man, that is, for "the flesh." In contrast, the law may not rule "in heaven," that is, in the conscience of man. The law may not be enthroned in the conscience, rather Christ, who is the righteousness given from God. He is the "law of the law," that is, freedom; and the "death of death," that is, eternal life and salvation. The Reformer says the conscience is like a bride chamber where the bride, that is, the believer, and the bridegroom, that is, Christ, are alone together, and the servants, that is, works, are not allowed to be present. The servants belong in the kitchen and in other places in the house, where the joyful bride serves her neighbors and keeps busy. The moment "the devil places works in the conscience," (in other words, makes a person believe works are a prerequisite for salvation), joy ceases to exist, life passes, and the man becomes weak and powerless. For this reason Luther emphasizes that beyond the conscience, that is, in relation to one's own flesh (namely, "the old man"), the law "must be

³²LW 27:13-14; WA 40 II:15, 28-16, 18 (Dr).

converted into God." Here on this point it can not be spoken "honorably enough." In the conscience, however, hence before God, the law is a "death-bringing devil." The Reformer maintains, that the law and Christ are mutually exclusive in the conscience:

Therefore let the godly person learn that the Law and Christ are mutually contradictory and altogether incompatible. When Christ is present, the Law must not rule in any way but must retreat from the conscience and yield the bed to Christ alone, since this is too narrow to hold them both (Isaiah 28:20). Let Him rule alone in righteousness, safety, happiness, and life, so that the conscience may happily fall asleep in Christ, without any awareness of Law, sin, or death.³³

b. The spiritual office of the law and the participation of the believer in Christ

Although the law principally belongs "in the world" and not "in heaven," it has, nevertheless, an essential function in the life of faith [*Glaubensleben*]. Notwithstanding this, that the law in the conscience, that is, in the determination of the relationship with God, is "fatal," it is "inherently good," (one may see Romans 7:12-13). In taking notice of its office of death [*Todesamtes*], it is the most important spiritual function of the law to expose "the true face" of the man behind the mask and to show his ugly wickedness. Precisely in the exposing of sin, the law kills the old Adam. In this way Luther interprets the thought of Paul: "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good. . ." (Romans 7:13, KJV). Luther speaks concerning the exposing and therefore killing function of the law:

(The Law) produces in a man the knowledge of himself Therefore the Law is a minister and a preparation for grace. For God is the God of the humble, the miserable, the afflicted, the oppressed, the desperate, and of those who have been brought down to nothing at

³³LW 26:366; WA 40 I:558, 33-559, 15 (Dr).

all. And it is the nature of God to exalt the humble, to feed the hungry, to enlighten the blind, to comfort the miserable and afflicted, to justify sinners, to give life to the dead, and to save those who are desperate and damned. For He is the almighty Creator, who makes everything out of nothing.³⁴

Christ is thus the death of death, which the law points out. One may compare this with the thought of Paul: "Therefore, my brethren, you were made to die to the law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit to God" (Romans 7:4, NASB). From the same starting point Luther interprets also the following word of Paul: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4, NASB). Because the law means "death" and "ruin," it is obvious that this "darkness" and "cloud" in which, according to the Reformer, Christ is really present, is also such "darkness" and "ruin" as it emerges through the self-recognition on account of the law. The self-recognition revealed through the law "kills," that is, brings man to a state that the Reformer describes with the concepts "meek," "pitiful," "downcast," "afflicted," "despairing," "ruined," "dead," and "blind." "The darkness" of faith is certainly not unique and alone—a "darkness" drawn immediately from the law. In addition there is and belongs also, for example, a "twilight" that is at work in faith in God's dominion and visitations. It is certainly obvious that also the "nothing" effected by the law and the "darkness" of self-recognition are an essential dimension of that "darkness" and "cloud" in which Christ is truly present.

Altogether, that which has been said above about Luther's view of the law confirms the result which has been achieved in the interpretation of the real character of Luther's conception of faith. The law brings about only "something worldly"; on the other hand, faith in no way deals with those "worldly things," but in it "the worldly ceases" and "the heavenly

³⁴LW 26:314; WA 40 I:487, 32-488, 19 (Dr).

begins." Faith is participation in the divine life itself. Luther says:

Therefore the Law of Moses produces nothing that goes beyond the things of the world; that is, it merely shows both politically and theologically the evils that there are in the world. With its terrors it merely drives the conscience to thirst and yearn for the promise of God and to look at Christ. But for this the Holy Spirit is necessary, to say to the heart: "After the Law has performed its function in you, it is not the will of God that you merely be terrified and killed, but that you recognize your misery and your lost condition through the Law and then do not despair but believe in Christ, who is 'the end of the Law, that everyone who has faith may be justified' (Romans 10:4)." Clearly there is nothing of the world being granted here; but everything of the world comes to an end here, and so do all the laws, while that which is divine begins.³⁵

It is then, in the last analysis, the "theological" function of the law to make the human partake of the person of Christ and the divine life found in Him. Herein the Reformer's view of the law unveils also the early church's realistic character of his Christology. In the commentary on the letter to the Galatians are places in which this especially manifests itself:

Thus with the sweetest names Christ is called my Law, my sin, and my death, in opposition to the Law, sin, and death, even though in fact He is nothing but sheer liberty, righteousness, life, and eternal salvation. Therefore He became Law to the Law, sin to sin, and death to death, in order that He might redeem me from the curse of the Law, justify me, and make me alive. And so Christ is both: While He is the Law, He is liberty; while He is sin, He is righteousness; and while He is death, He is life. For by the very fact that He permitted the Law to accuse Him, sin to damn Him, and death to devour Him He abrogated the Law, damned sin, destroyed death, and justified and saved me. Thus Christ is a poison against the Law, sin, and

³⁵LW 26:364; WA 40 I:556, 20-28.

death, and simultaneously a remedy to regain liberty, righteousness, and eternal life.³⁶

According to Luther, justification, viewed from Christ's work, is "outside" of man, (although justification happens within him) and is accounted to him. Luther, however, discusses justification essentially from the person of man. From this aspect is the person of Christ likewise real ontological righteousness, as He is freedom and eternal life. In the participation in Christ the believer has a real ontological portion in the "death of death" (that is, in life), in the "sin of sin" (that is, in righteousness), and in the "law of the law" (that is, in freedom). This Christ-realism [*Christus-Realismus*], according to the theme of our examination, underlies Luther's interesting thoughts that the union of the believer and Christ is so complete that they form "one person."

D. Christ and the believer as one person (*quaedam una persona*)

The preceding has established that both Luther's thought of Christ as *forma fidei* and his view of the law lead directly to the central theme of his theology of faith, according to which faith means the presence of Christ and thus participation in the "divine life." His interpretation of the sentence in the letter to the Galatians: "I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20) shows further how thoroughly the Reformer understands the union between Christ and the believer. The "old I" of the Christian dies and the person of Christ steps in its place. Christ "is in us" and "remains in us." The life with which the believer lives is really ontologically "Christ Himself." At the same time it turns out to be that Luther deems it necessary to express the relationship between Christ and the believer in the *forma* concept. If this relationship were described only in a "spiritual manner"—as the Reformer states—man could not understand how close this union is in reality. The place which in a fundamental way illuminates Luther's theology of faith, reads as follows:

["Yet not I."] That is, "I do not live in my own person now, but Christ lives in me." The person does indeed live, but not in itself or for its own person. But who is this "I" of whom he says: "Yet

³⁶LW 26:163; WA 40 I:278, 20-29.

not I"? It is the one that has the Law and is obliged to do works, the one that is a person separate from Christ. This "I" Paul rejects; for "I," as a person distinct from Christ, belongs to death and hell. This is why he says: "Not I, but Christ lives in me." Christ is my "form," which adorns my faith as color or light adorns a wall. (This fact has to be expounded in this crude way, for there is no spiritual way for us to grasp the idea that Christ clings and dwells in us as closely and intimately as light or whiteness clings to a wall.) "Christ," he says, "is fixed and cemented to me and abides in me. The life that I now live, He lives in me. Indeed, Christ Himself is the life that I now live. In this way, therefore, Christ and I are one."³⁷

The thought of the *unio personalis* reveals anew that Luther understands the ontological quality of the presence of Christ as entirely real. Christ is freedom, righteousness, and life. Through His presence He banishes or "absorbs," as it were, the sin, condemnation, and death found in the believer. The Reformer says:

Living in me as He does, Christ abolishes the Law, damns sin, and kills death; for at His presence all these cannot help disappearing. Christ is eternal Peace, Comfort, Righteousness, and Life, to which the terror of the Law, sadness of mind, sin, hell, and death have to yield. Abiding and living in me, Christ removes and absorbs all the evils that torment and afflict me. This attachment to Him causes me to be liberated from the terror of the Law and of sin, pulled out of my own skin, and transferred into Christ and into His kingdom, which is a kingdom of grace, righteousness, peace, joy, life, salvation, and eternal glory. Since I am in Him, no evil can harm me.³⁸

Many of the central themes of the Reformer already mentioned, such as faith as participation in the person of Christ, the participation in the "divine nature," faith as victor over powers of destruction, the *communicatio idiomatum* and so forth, are expressed in connection with the picture of the *unio personalis* as, for example, the following quotation shows:

³⁷LW 26:167; WA 40 I:283, 20-32.

³⁸LW 26:167; WA 40 I:283, 33-284, 19 (Dr).

Meanwhile my old man (Ephesians 4:22) remains outside and is subject to the Law. But so far as justification is concerned, Christ and I must be so closely attached that He lives in me and I in Him. What a marvelous way of speaking! Because He lives in me, whatever grace, righteousness, life, peace, and salvation there is in me is all Christ's; nevertheless, it is mine as well, by the cementing and attachment that are through faith, by which we become as one body in the Spirit. Since Christ lives in me, grace, righteousness, life, and eternal salvation must be present with Him; and the Law, sin, and death must be absent. Indeed, the Law must be crucified, devoured, and abolished by the Law—and sin by sin, death by death, the devil by the devil. In this way Paul seeks to withdraw us completely from ourselves, from the Law, and from works, and to transplant us into Christ and faith in Christ, so that in the area of justification we look only at grace, and separate it far from the Law and from works, which belong far away.³⁹

From the pictorial expressions, which illustrate the union between Christ and the believer, the *unio personalis* is perhaps the most intensive. Although here it refers to a concept that comes close to mysticism, it is an essential element of Luther's doctrine of justification. The thought of the personal union is no mere accidental or incidental critical development. The Reformer underscores the *unio* thought often, especially when he polemicises against the scholastic doctrine of justification. The thought of the personal union contains therefore something important from the substance of the Reformation view itself. Luther says also:

But faith must be taught correctly, namely, that by it you are so cemented to Christ that He and you are as one person, which cannot be separated but remains attached to Him forever and declares: "I am as Christ." And Christ, in turn, says: "I am as that sinner who is attached to Me, and I to him. For by faith we are joined together into one flesh and one bone." Thus Ephesians 5:30 says: "We are members of the body of Christ, of His flesh and of His bones," in such a way that this faith couples Christ and me more intimately than a husband is coupled to his wife. Therefore this faith is no idle quality; but it is a thing of such magnitude that

³⁹LW 26:167-168; WA 40 I:284, 20-33.

it obscures and completely removes those foolish dreams of the sophists' doctrine—the fiction of a “formed faith” and of love, of merits, our worthiness, our quality, etc.⁴⁰

There is thus no doubt that the thought of the real participation in Christ belongs to the essence of Luther's view of justification. The distinction between justification and the dwelling of God in the believer representative of later Lutheranism, is, at least conceptually, foreign to the Reformer. In the large commentary on Galatians there is a place where Luther explicitly seems to throw out the view of later Lutheranism, although the bulk of his polemics is directed against the program of *fides charitate formata*. The Reformer maintains that—if in the doctrine of justification the persons of Christ and of the believer are separated from one another—simultaneously salvation is still conceived as being in the realm of the law, which means, once again, “to be dead in the sight of God”:

It is unprecedented and insolent to say: “I live, I do not live; I am dead, I am not dead; I am a sinner, I am not a sinner; I have the Law, I do not have the Law.” But this phraseology is true in Christ and through Christ. When it comes to justification, therefore, if you divide Christ's Person from your own, you are in the Law; you remain in it and live in yourself, which means that you are dead in the sight of God and damned by the Law. . . .⁴¹

The persons of Christ and of the believer become one in faith, and, at the danger of forfeiting salvation, may not be separated.

Luther does not shy away from the conclusion that man in faith becomes “God.” This thought, which has fallen into oblivion in Protestantism, is—rightly interpreted—an organic component of Luther's theology of faith.

⁴⁰LW 26:168-169; WA 40 I:285, 24-286, 20 (Dr). The postscript is even stronger: “Sed fides facit ex te et Christo quasi unam personam, ut non segregeris a Christo, imo in hoescas, quasi dicaste Christum, et contra: ego sum ille peccator, quia inheret mihi et econtra.” WA 40 I:285, 5-7.

⁴¹LW 26:168; WA 40 I:285, 12-17.

E. "Through faith man becomes God"

1. The Christian as "divine person"

Luther knows not only in substance the thought of the participation of divine life. He, as already established in the introduction, also refers terminologically to the doctrine of deification. Thereby he uses mostly the same passage (2 Peter 1:4), upon which the patristic deification concept rests also. In the Galatians commentary, the Reformer indeed does not refer often to the *theopoiesis* doctrine, but the work is not completely without points of contact with this doctrine. For instance, when Luther illustrates the relation between faith and love, he says, "through faith man becomes God, 2 Peter 1."⁴² Further, according to him the union between Christ and the believer has the result that the believer is a "completely divine person." Also the Christian himself is victor over the powers of destruction because of the Christ really present in him.

The one who has faith is a completely divine man, a son of God, the inheritor of the universe. He is the victor over the world, sin, death, and the devil. Hence he cannot be praised enough. . . . Therefore the Abraham who has faith fills heaven and earth; thus every Christian fills heaven and earth by his faith. . . .⁴³

Faith owns Christ as "a precious stone in a signet ring." Therefore the believer, who possesses this "small gift" in his conscience, is "greater than heaven and earth, law, devil, and death." In the sight of men Christ's gift is small, but its "insignificance is greater than the whole world."⁴⁴

From the fact that Christ as "gift" is present in the believer follows the unique position of the Christian in creation. Christians become "lords over all things," including sin and death. Luther's view of the participation of the Christian in the spiritual priesthood and of the kingship of all believers is also based on the thought of the presence of Christ. Thus the classic place in Luther's

⁴²LW 26:100 [For at this point faith makes a man God (2 Peter 1:4)]; WA 40 I:182, 15.

⁴³LW 26:247; WA 40 I:390, 22-24.

⁴⁴LW 26:134; WA 40 I:234-235, 2.

Reformation program document [*Programmschrift*], "The Freedom of a Christian," unfolds exactly the *Christus-praesens* concept:

Just as Christ is the first born, with honor and dignity, so He shares with all His Christians, that they through faith shall all also be kings and priests in Christ. As St. Peter says 1 Peter 2, you are a priestly kingdom and a royal priesthood, and this means that a Christian through faith becomes so exalted over all things, that he is a lord spiritually above all, so that nothing can do him any harm for his salvation. Yes, everything must be under him and serve him in obtaining salvation. As St. Paul teaches Romans 8, all things must help for the best for the elect, be it life, death, sin, godliness, good and evil, however one would say. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 3, all things are yours be it life or death, the present or the future, etc. . . .⁴⁵

Because of the Christ present in faith, the Christian according to Luther is also a "wonderful creator": ". . . a Christian becomes a skillful artisan and a wonderful creator, who can make joy out of sadness, comfort out of terror, righteousness out of sin, and life out of death, . . ."⁴⁶

In its Lutheran form the deification concept manifests itself when Luther explains that the believer acquires the form of Christ

⁴⁵From "Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen," Sta Z, 281, 1-12 WA 7:27, 17-28. "The Freedom of a Christian" (LW31:354) reads: "Now just as Christ by his birthright obtained these two prerogatives, so he imparts them to and shares them with everyone who believes in him according to the law of the above-mentioned marriage, according to which the wife owns whatever belongs to the husband. Hence all of us who believe in Christ are priests and kings in Christ, as 1 Peter 2 [:9] says: 'You are a chosen race, God's own people, a royal priesthood, a priestly kingdom, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.'

"The nature of this priesthood and kingship is something like this: First, with respect to the kingship, every Christian is by faith so exalted above all things that, by virtue of a spiritual power, he is lord of all things without exception, so that nothing can do him any harm. As a matter of fact, all things are made subject to him and are compelled to serve him in obtaining salvation. Accordingly Paul says in Romans 8 [:28], 'All things work together for good for the elect,' and in 1 Corinthians 3 [:21-23], 'All things are yours whether. . . life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's. . .'"

⁴⁶LW 27:74; WA 40 II:93, 29-31.

through faith. In faith, the Christian becomes the image (*imago*) of God immediately [*aleich*]. The Christian has the form (*forma*) of Christ and the likeness (*similitudo*) of Him. Becoming similar to God means, according to Luther, the *Transitus a lege in fidem Christi*.⁴⁷ Faith is, once again, becoming Christ-like, because Christ is present in faith and makes man take part in His divine attributes. This is expressed quite clearly in a passage in the *Kirchenpostille*, which has previously been noted in part.

... and we are filled with all kinds of God's fullness, that is in the Hebrew manner said so often: that we are filled in all manner, that *He makes full and we become full of God*, and overwhelms with all gifts and grace, and fills with His Spirit, which makes us brave and illuminates us with His light, and His life lives in us, His blessedness makes us blessed, His love in us awakens love, in short, that *all that He is and can do, in us becomes total and works powerfully that we will become totally deified*, not only partly or have alone some pieces of God, but all abundance. It is much written about, how the human being is to become deified, they have built ladders on which one could climb to heaven and many such things. But it is vain, partial work. Here is the right and closest way that shows the way to get there, that you become full of God, that you lack not a piece, but that you have all in one lump, that all that you say, think, or where you go, in summary: *your entire life be godly*.⁴⁸

Luther maintains in this cited piece – which for the most part has fallen into oblivion in Luther research – that faith means true and complete deification. The program of *fides charitate formata*, which rests on the Greek ontology and its *eros* concept, however defines only a partial, imperfect, and inferior deification. In it the relationship with God is a perpetual movement toward the transcendent, toward God, who, however remains always in “heaven.” True faith, on the other hand, unites, according to Luther, the Christian with God, who “came down” and who in

⁴⁷LW 26:430-432; WA 40 I:650, 3, 651, 3.

⁴⁸WA 17 I:1, 438, 14-28. Emphasis is Mannermaa's. One may also see Watt, 47, for an alternate translation.

faith is present with His whole fullness in sinful man. Faith is "heaven."

2. The deification concept and the relation between faith and works

The meaning of the deification concept for Luther's doctrine of justification culminates in that he understands the relationship between faith and works as analogous to the relationship between the divine and the human natures of Christ. The Christ present in faith is a *forma*, which informs the works or incarnates itself in them.

Therefore in theology let faith always be the divinity of works, diffused throughout the works in the same way that the divinity is throughout the humanity of Christ. Anyone who touches the heat in the heated iron touches the iron; and whoever has touched the skin of Christ has actually touched God. Therefore faith is the "do-all" in works, if I may use this expression.⁴⁹

For Luther faith is the *forma* and works, on the other hand, the *materia*. The Christ present in faith gives to the works His *forma*, that is, He incarnates Himself in the works (*fides composita, fides concreta, fides incarnata*).⁵⁰ When the reality of faith incarnates itself into the works, these therefore become faith-generated works (*opera fideificata*) or—as Luther explicitly determines—"deified works" (*opera deificata*).⁵¹

The *deificatio*-concept belongs thus to the core of Luther's doctrine of justification. Based on this foundation it is clear to understand how the doctrine of justification and the view of the sanctification of man both form unity in Luther's theology.

⁴⁹LW 26:266; WA 40 I:417, 15-19.

⁵⁰[LW 26:266-267]; WA 40 I:417, 13.

⁵¹WA 40 I:20, 29.

Book Reviews

***The Postilla of Nicholas of Lyra on the Song of Songs.* By Nicholas of Lyra. Introduced, translated, and edited by James George Kieker. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998.**

This is the third volume of a series of texts and translations on biblical studies being issued by Marquette under the guidance of Kenneth Hagen as the general editor. *Reformation Texts with Translations (1350-1650)* is proving to be a very scholarly, yet readable addition to a pastor's library. James George Kieker is to be commended for accomplishing his goal of making the translation "clear and useful."

One of the benefits of this series is a brief introduction regarding the author. In addition to his life and works, a short summary of his place in exegetical history is provided. Finally, Kieker supplies a few examples of Luther's exegesis in relation to Lyra which should encourage the Lutheran pastor to plunge a little deeper into Luther's writings.

Nicholas sees the *Song* as a parable, but he desires to present a better and more literal interpretation than the Jews or other Catholic expositors. This literal sense is "not that which is signified by the words, but that which is signified by the things signified by the words" (31). Thus, the bride is the church of both Testaments and the *Song* is to be read as a retelling of the church's history from Adam through Constantine to the end of the age. His exegesis is thought-provoking and eye opening with regard to a discussion of what the literal sense really is.

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***African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness.* Edited by Milton Sernett. Second Edition. Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 1999. x+608 pages. \$23.95. Paper.**

Milton Sernett, one time professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois (1972-75), originally published *African American Religion* in 1985 to challenge an historiographical claim: that the paucity of sources for the African American religion in America rendered the task of interpreting that tradition within American religion generally an historical impossibility. Sernett's first edition effectively accomplished that task. Now in its second edition, *African American Religion* remains a rich collection of resources and an absolute necessity for any serious student of American Christianity.

Sernett organizes the text chronologically for the most part, beginning with the seventeenth century and ranging through the late 1970s. Seven sections cover different historical periods and geographical regions. The majority of the material comes out the broader Protestant tradition, though Sernett does include selections

from outside of Christianity. Additions to the second edition include more material considering the so called "Great Migration," as well increased primary source material by women.

In a sense, *African American Religion* acts simultaneously as an affirmation and a mild corrective to Albert Raboteau's *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). Sernett successfully shows that, even given their challenging circumstances, African Americans were remarkably successful at fashioning a visible and lasting institution (a point also made by Eugene Genovese in his outstanding *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* [New York: Random House, 1972]). Yet, the reader comes away from the anthology with a sense of incompleteness. Not in the volume proper, but in what in the companion volume it ultimately lacks. In other words, *African American Religion* anticipates serving as a attendant volume to a technical history of African American religion. That volume has yet to be written.

Along these lines, though narrowing the point, American Lutherans have not sufficiently considered the contributions of African Americans to their own tradition. That may in part be due to the simple demographic fact that Lutheranism's numerical strength has historically been in the north, while, at least until the Great Migration, the majority of America's blacks lived in the South. It may also reflect Lutheran historians' penchant for writing confessional histories of the church in the United States. Other interpretations are also possible. What is certain is that Jeff G. Johnson's *Black Christians: The Untold Lutheran Story* has simply initiated the historical task of interpreting Lutheranism among African Americans, though it remains an incomplete endeavor (one may see my critique of Johnson's "Muhlenberg's Relationship to African Americans," in *CTQ* 63 [January 1999]: 63). Much remains to be done to tell the story of African America Lutherans fully. Sernett's volume, however, should serve as an aid in that task. The field for the history of Christianity in general and Lutheranism in America in particular is ripe. One can only hope that Sernett's work will encourage more scholarship in this area.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

Affirmations and Admonitions: Lutheran Decisions and Dialogue with Reformed, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic Churches. By Gabriel Fackre and Michael Root. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998. Paper. 124 pages.

At its 1997 national assembly, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America acted on three significant ecumenical statements. The assembly passed the *Formula of Agreement* with three Reformed church bodies (the Presbyterian Church USA, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ). The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* with the Roman Catholic church also passed, affirming its claim that the remaining differences on justification between the two church bodies ought not be divisive or

condemned by the other. The *Concordat of Agreement* with the Episcopal Church in America failed to gain the two-thirds majority required for passage—by only six votes.

Fackre (Reformed) and Root (Lutheran) were participants in the ecumenical dialogues leading up to these agreements. Professor Fackre was actively involved only in the *Formula of Agreement*, but his three essays deal with ecumenism in general and all three proposals. Root's four essays also provide general thoughts on ecumenism, as well as specific ideas about the three proposals. With the single exception of Root's final essay, this collection was presented to ELCA seminaries prior to the votes as the Hem-Fry lecture series for 1997.

The essays by Fackre are all marked by an attractive humility. He argues that one ought to learn from the points of difference between one's own theological tradition and that of a dialogue partner. Within this perspective, the different church bodies complement one another. Each entity should be affirmed for its differing "gifts" and each also has important admonitions it can offer to other Christian church bodies. Such a characterization of the theological divisions among Christians obviously means that they ought not continue to divide us.

In his first two lectures, Fackre defines the gifts of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions respectively. In general, Lutherans have a charism of concern for fundamental Christian beliefs. The specific beliefs for which Lutherans have contended most vigorously are characterized by Fackre as "haveability" and "simultaneity." The former refers to the traditional Lutheran insistence on the reality of Christ in the Sacrament and the Lutheran understanding of the person of Christ, which affirm that the finite is capable of the infinite. "Simultaneity" refers to the doctrine of *simul justus et peccator* which shows itself in the Lutheran understanding of justification by grace through faith.

On the other hand, the Reformed doctrinal gifts are "Sovereignty and Sanctification." "Sovereignty" implies the refusal to bind God too closely either to sacraments (Christ is, after all, at the Father's right hand) or confessions of faith (a creed presents a theology that must always be subject to potential revision). "Sanctification" is the perspective that sees grace "as power as well as pardon," a gift found not only among the Reformed, but also in Rome. These "gifts," when turned toward the dialogue partner, become admonitions or correctives to the partner's theology.

Fackre then turns to congregational life, where, referring to AC VII, the church is found. In contemporary congregational life Fackre sees both the worst examples of Christian accommodation to culture and hopeful signs of

"neo-confessional" pastors across denominational boundaries who are seeking to reclaim the Christian faith. How might the passage of denomination-wide ecumenical statements play into congregational life? Fackre dreams that congregations set free by ecumenical agreements will "become the locus for rare in-depth exploration of and witness to catholic faith, with commensurate enrichment of mission in all of its senses" (61).

In a chapter titled "What Are We Doing?" Root first provides a framework of understanding for church unity. Referring, like Fackre, to AC VII, Root sees church unity as constituted by the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments (no references to purity). This church unity creates a unity of faith and then unity of persons (common life). If a church can affirm the gospel and the sacraments of another, then they ought also to share a common life together. The prejudice of the churches should be in favor of unity.

Root's second chapter suggests criteria for ecumenical judgments. Lutherans have historically stressed theological criteria, affirms Root, but his focus is more toward praxis that is essential to the identity of the church. If nothing essential is missing, then we are obligated to unite. It is clearly Root's contention that the agreements of 1997 reflect the satisfying of such criteria, although he acknowledges that significant differences still exist between the Lutheran, Reformed, Episcopal, and Roman churches. The differences are acceptable, however, under the principal of an "internally differentiated consensus" (the term is Harding Meyer's). He illustrates the principal at work in the agreement on justification: "Even if the doctrine of justification is the article by which the church stands and falls, we do not need to agree on every aspect of justification in order to say we are in fact preaching the same gospel rightly" (83).

The third of Root's contributions discusses the practical results of the decisions—assuming their passage. He notes that both doctrinal relativism and changing moral positions (ordination of practicing homosexuals) present challenges to how the agreements might be accepted. In addition, differing polities would lead to various means and levels of acceptance within the churches. Quoting John Spong, Root acknowledges that ecumenical decisions may represent no more than skepticism about the possibility of any final theological truth. Root denies such skepticism at work in this process and affirms instead [in] "the Christ who comes to us graciously in word and sacrament we, that is, Lutherans and many other Christians, are one. Because we are one, we should seek to live out that oneness not just in informal and ad hoc ways, but in an institutionalized, structured, ongoing common life" (107). Root does ask worriedly: "[W]hether a common life . . . will lead to an

erosion of the classical core of Christian belief within the ELCA?" but reassures himself and his readers that he does not believe that to be the case.

His final contribution to the book was written after the ELCA actions of 1997. He offers his interpretation of why the *Formula* and *Joint Declaration* passed and the *Concordat* failed. The failure of the latter was probably due to the fact that it would have required actual organizational changes. He closes on a note of hope that a revised *Concordat* will pass the next assembly, together with new ecumenical proposals involving Moravians and others.

There is much that Fackre and Root offer for Missouri to consider seriously. Surely we can learn from other churches and ought to approach ecumenical issues with humility. Our strictures about fellowship with other Christians have, more often than not, resulted in more avoidance of other Christians than in genuine efforts to understand and persuade. Having said that, it is plain that Fackre and Root have more in common with one another than with either Missouri or the kind of Christians who formulated earlier joint doctrinal statements, for example, the confessions of the first seven ecumenical councils. The difference is in the attention given to the little word of AC VII that is omitted in this book: "purity." Neither Fackre nor Root captures the spirit of the Augustana's teaching on church because of this omission. If the church is wherever one finds some form of "Gospel preaching" and administration of sacraments, then the passion for purity at work through the ages was mistaken. This book suggests a perspective that views the historic church as more of an obstreperous old crab than the bride of Christ.

An "internally differentiated consensus" simply begs the question of "purity." It also begs the early Christian passion for orthodoxy. Root downplays the historic points of theological divergence among the western churches. For example, on the question of the Lord's Supper, the crucial issue for Lutheranism has been the dependability of the external word, not, as Root claims, "a metaphysical mistake about the mode of presence." Theological truth, however, is all about God (a rather metaphysical issue). For Root, theology is more about us than God. That presents a real problem. While one ought not minimize the importance of the communicant's confidence at the altar, for instance, the truth or falsehood about which he or she is confident is actually the more important thing.

Fackre's stance is similarly unconvincing. It is necessary to be open to another Christian church as they contend for the truth. Nonetheless, we cannot glibly maintain that being open to affirmation and admonition finishes the ecumenical task. What if the Reformed admonition regarding the sovereignty of God results in a false (metaphysical) conclusion: that the finite is incapable of the infinite, for example? Or, what if we disagree with such a

Reformed statement as: "Of course, sacramentology is not soteriology" (24) and say, "If 'Baptism now saves us' (1 Peter 3:21), then true sacramentology *is* soteriology!" What then? Do we unite, or do we recognize that someone is wrong and work to correct the falsehoods?

Root and Fackre ought to be commended for presenting a vision of revived concern for Christian truth within traditional Christian denominations. Fackre rightly lauds the movement of some toward new study of the ancient ecumenical consensus. (Thomas Oden and company certainly qualify.) This, it seems, is the direction that ecumenism should be exploring more vigorously. Such an approach would not produce easy agreements, it would instead promote a passionate defense of the earliest Christian creeds and agreements and use them to explore later divisions. While both authors seemingly would favor such promulgation of the Christian faith, neither seems to realize that the watery form of ecumenism they represent has proven a failure in that task.

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A History of the Synoptic Problem. By David Laird Dungan. The Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1999. 526 pages. Cloth. \$39.95.

The "Two Gospels" hypothesis, which sees Matthew as the first Gospel and Luke as the second, has failed to replace the "Two Source" hypothesis, which gives place of honor to Mark and "Q." This battle Dungan concedes to the opponents of the theory also known as the Griesbach hypothesis, but not without presenting an intriguing account of how biblical scholarship arrived at its present state of affairs. He marshals a marvelous array of historical data to show how the church viewed the relationship of the Gospels to one another and how the scholars arrived in positing "Q" and Mark as foundational documents for the synoptic Gospels only in the last half of the nineteenth century. In the midst of a hostile scholarly environment, Dungan offers a virtual history of theology around a core of theories offered for the Gospels' origins. He knows the Griesbach hypothesis has attracted few converts. The only consolation is that Markan priority is less assured, but this good news-bad news has been counterbalanced by a resurgent scholarly devotion to the non-existent "Q" document, to which scholars attribute several stages of development ("Q¹," "Q²," and on, and a "Q" community.) What scholars determine "Q" or its antecedents to be one day may be different the next. By the nature of things, a hypothetical document is immune to the critique afforded real documents. Though "Q" remains elusive, its place as the

untouchable foundation for Gospel studies is assured for the foreseeable future, so Dungan opines. Though discussion about "Q" is abstract, its results are disastrous. Jesus and His words are relegated to the shadows of an unrecoverable history and the earliest recoverable form of Christianity is a religion of ethics and not grace. The preacher, in looking at the Gospel texts, has no certainty about their origins or the processes which led to their final form. Worse, Jesus is irretrievable. Without the constraints of an authoritative text, the preacher is now free to dip into the process that produced the Gospels at those points that serve his purposes.

Ten of the twenty-three chapters address the attitudes towards the Gospels in the first five centuries. Included here is an analysis of Luke's preface in showing how this Gospel handled the historical details it purports to relay. Dungan also discusses how the church wrestled with four Gospels, which, in spite of their similarities, obviously differed. Harmonizing the Gospels still attracts conservatives, but the process is not without its serious drawbacks. A second section, also with ten chapters, outlines the origins of the *textus receptus* and the rise of the historical-critical method. A matter for conservatives to ponder is that the *textus receptus*, which is behind the King James Version, was pieced together by Erasmus and hence, its claim to authenticity is not without problems. Practitioners of the historical-critical method are faced with the embarrassment that its originator, Baruch Spinoza, had a profound hatred for supernaturalism, including that of his own Judaism. Throughout, Dungan shows how current philosophies and political situations influenced Gospel studies. He argues persuasively that nineteenth-century German nationalism was a factor in scholars replacing Matthew with Mark as the first Gospel. Mark, with no reference to Peter's receiving the keys, better served imperial policies, which saw Rome, especially with its dogma of papal infallibility, as the real enemy. For his efforts in promoting the now standard Markan priority, Heinrich Julius Holtzmann was awarded an appointment to the University of Strasbourg. A third section focuses on recent theories of Gospel origins, including those with which Dungan has been involved. More than a hundred pages of endnotes provide ample documentation and additional discussion.

Dungan shows how historical-critical and textual reconstructions are not based on objective criteria, but are inherently subjective and biased, being influenced by theological, philosophical, and political developments. The most "objective" methods and conclusions have histories that serious scholars should subject to the same kind of analyses to which they subject the Gospels. He uncovers the biases on which much of biblical scholarship rests. Knowing one's biases is therapeutic and acknowledging them can be pleasantly

reconstructive. Dungan has produced a necessary and very readable historical and theological prolegomena for all students of the Gospels.

David P. Scaer

Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning. Edited by Robin Leaver and Joyce Ann Zimmerman. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998. 452 Pages, Paper. \$34.95.

Robin Leaver is not a Lutheran, but he continues to offer important work for the Lutheran community because he understands Lutheran theology. His willingness to defend the most difficult issues of practice is quite striking, especially in light of the many within Lutheranism who are tired of the battle and seem to be jumping ship right and left for new identities. Though Leaver did not author this book, *Liturgy and Music* is worthwhile reading throughout, but readers will without a doubt enjoy how Robin Leaver tends to shine.

There are two significant reasons why Leaver continues to work from within the context of the Lutheran theological tradition. First, the defense of matters like theology equals practice, substance equals style, content equals form, has a better chance of being heard, honestly listened to, and quite often even respected within the Lutheran context. For therein lies a high view of God's activity as the faithful worship, a view that is rarely found outside of Lutheranism. When God's act is held up, our response is put in its proper place. The extra-Lutheran polemic concerning such matters is normally about high standards, which is quickly seen by objectors for what it is — snobbery. Secondly, and this is not an insignificant factor, four of the most influential Lutherans in history — Heinrich Schütz, Michael Praetorius, Johann Sebastian Bach, Martin Franzmann — have shaped Leaver's thinking, writing, and scholarly pursuits. Great mentors indeed!

Leaver collects a number of essays on what many consider to be two very different subjects: liturgy and music. This union is important because the two are frequently separated in journals and, more tragically, in pastors' thinking. The significance of the union is stated in the introduction: "Liturgy and music are not presented as two domains isolated from each other but rather are interpreted from the premise that foundational issues in liturgy have their interrelated counterpart (and counterpoint) in music. So much so, that we can rightfully say we have *musical liturgy* rather than music during liturgy."

The collection is informative in the wide range of liturgical perspectives presented, and it is healthy because of the "lifetime" approach that pervades the writing. All the writers support and practice liturgy and therefore think of the long-term, lifetime understanding of the church's life. They also then know that liturgy and music of substance and worth requires time, perhaps

even a lifetime to sink in, rehearse, practice, and live – while it becomes an *ethos*. That understanding then defines life together.

The volume's essays speak to that behavior on twenty-five subjects such as: the liturgical year, the structure of the liturgy of the hours, the place of the homily, the role of prayer, the role of liturgical music, liturgical music as homily and hermeneutic, hymnody in reformation churches, ritual, the eucharist, symbolic actions, and others. One comes away amazed, yet again, at how prayer life shapes all that surrounds it. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*.

While Dr. Leaver's work and influence reaches far beyond Lutheranism, he articulates a Lutheran identity about matters of worship practice that helps Lutherans define a faithful Lutheran *ethos* (behavior) in these times. That is what makes *Liturgy and Music: Lifetime Learning* important for the readers of this journal. Readers of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* will probably not agree with all that is said here; nevertheless, they will find *Liturgy and Music* informative and even stimulating reading in these times of challenge for Lutheran theology and practice. While the whole volume is salutary reading, readers of this journal will especially appreciate Chapter 21: "Liturgical Music as Anamnesis." Here the very heart of the theology equals practice discussion is eloquently defended and held up for the benefit of the faithful.

Richard C. Resch

Christology. By Hans Schwarz. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998. xii + 352 pages.

Hans Schwarz opens this book by noting a resurgent interest in the quest for the historical Jesus, which began in earnest with Albert Schweitzer. He aims to address modern questions regarding the historical Christ by engaging in dialogue with earlier theologians. Beginning with the Enlightenment and its encouragement of reason over revelation, Schwarz traces developments in Christology. He attempts to cover all sides of the debate over Jesus, from Jesus' self-understanding, to the relationship between Jesus' humanity and divinity, to His resurrection. Schwarz delves into eschatology, the eucharist, various critical methods, and general directions in Christology from the early church through medieval times down to the twentieth century.

Schwarz divides the book into three main sections: 1) In Search of the Historical Jesus; 2) The Biblical Testimony and its Assessment Through History; and 3) The Relevance of Jesus Christ for Today. Each of these sections could easily be expanded into a full volume. In an attempt to cover the vast scope of each section within a relatively small space, Schwarz touches only briefly on many theologians. The brevity with which lifetimes of work and complex theologies are addressed can, at times, create misleading notions of what these theologians actually taught. Schwarz' book might be more effective if he covered less ground

with more detail. He also seems to lean toward a kind of decision theology at times and allows for paths to salvation other than Christ. "Jesus is unique, but salvation through him is not exclusive" (287). Despite these difficulties, Schwarz' conclusions about the historical Christ are more often helpful than not.

The strengths of this book do help compensate for its weaknesses. As Schwarz examines the various christological issues, his assessments are usually agreeable with orthodox understandings of Christ. For instance, he supports Christ as both divine and human, the virgin birth, and the historical fact of the resurrection. Where much of modern scholarship points to redaction in Jesus' predictions of His death, Schwarz supports Christ's predictions as genuine prophecy.

Perhaps his most valuable contribution to modern scholarship is a willingness to engage seriously the biblical witness of the historical Christ. His view of Scripture is best summarized by the following quotation:

... this means also the obligation for scholarship to stay in tune with the New Testament and not to reconstruct a contextual Jesus who stands contrary to the biblical message. There must be a fidelity to the biblical documents, not just because they happened to be received in the canon, but because the church decided that qualitatively there was more to be gained from them than from extracanonical literature. Fidelity to the New Testament also implies an acceptance of its truthfulness (334-335).

In an age when the starting point for much of biblical scholarship seems to be a healthy dose of textual skepticism, it is refreshing to hear someone who is at least willing to shape his scholarship around an appreciation for the sacredness of the text of Scripture.

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Embassy of Onesimus: The Letter of Paul to Philemon. By Allen Dwight Callahan. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1997. Paper. 96 Pages. \$11.00.

Most Christians assume that Paul wrote canonical Philemon to reconcile two estranged individuals to one another in Christ: master Philemon and the slave Onesimus, who had been a runaway (Greek: δραπετης; Latin: *fugitivus*). However, no formal identification of Onesimus as a runaway ever occurs within the letter (although Paul does refer to him twice as a "slave" [δοῦλος] in verse 16). Admittedly, the "runaway slave hypothesis" in Philemon is just that—an hypothesis. Yet, as many believe, it is still the best way to regard the letter as a whole and allows the gospel to predominate in the interpretation of the letter instead of some alien view. Few moderns challenged the idea that Onesimus was a runaway slave until the great doctoral dissertation (later

published) of John Knox in 1935, who presented an altogether different understanding: Philemon was not a personal letter of reconciliation but rather a public appeal to the Colossian congregation for the full-time services of Onesimus whom Paul desired to have henceforth as a missionary companion. Since that time there have been several more recent attempts to maintain and augment the Knox thesis (Cope, Winter, and now Callahan come immediately to mind). An representative example of the effort to uphold the traditional "runaway slave hyposthesis" is John G. Nordling, "Onesimus fugitivus: A Defense of the Runaway Slave Hypothesis in Philemon," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 41 (Fall 1991): 97-119.

Callahan, to his credit, points out those aspects of his background that make it impossible for him to believe the traditional interpretation of Philemon. Raised in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Callahan is spiritual heir to a group of antebellum slaves who once walked out on a Philemon sermon delivered to them by the Rev. J. Colcock Jones, a white Methodist missionary to slaves in Georgia, who urged fidelity and obedience to masters: "Some [of the slaves] solemnly declared that there was no such Epistle in the Bible; others, that it was not the Gospel; others, that I preached to please the masters; others, that they did not care if they never [sic] heard me preach again" (in A. Raboteu, *Slave Religion* [Oxford, 1982] 139, cited in Callahan, 1).

After discounting any internal evidence in the letter itself which might suggest that Onesimus had indeed been a runaway slave (4-12), Callahan attempts to pin this interpretation on Chrysostom of the fourth century A.D., claiming that abolitionist Christians were, even then, challenging the "Roman slavocracy" of late imperial times (15). From then on, the runaway slave hypothesis became the dominant interpretation of the church, assumed by most theologians (Callahan engages Chrysostom, Luther, and Lightfoot, 4 and following). Ultimately, though, the dominant theory has to be rejected because this kind of "uncharitable guesswork" buys into the "stereotype of the thieving, indolent slave" which is "part of the mythology of all slaveholding societies" (9).

Callahan's counter proposal is an extension of mid-nineteenth-century exegesis, which strove to advance biblical arguments against slavery. Palpable tensions in the letter between Philemon and Onesimus reflect a falling out between estranged brothers, not a violated master-slave relationship (11; 30; 50; 69-60). After all, Paul refers to Onesimus in verse 16 as an ὁδελφός ἀγαπητός *in the flesh* (ἐν σαρκί) and in the Lord (ἐν κυρίῳ). Two articles in the *Harvard Theological Review* (86 [1993]: 357-76; 88 [1995]: 149-156) attempt to achieve this "alternative argumentum" in Philemon and probe ancient brotherly relationships in general.

One should note, however, that ἀδελφός is just as indeterminate a word in the Pauline correspondence as δοῦλος ever was. *Brother* occurs so frequently in the New Testament that, if considered in its own light, it can mean scarcely more than "Christian" or at least "correligionist" (one may compare von Soden, "ἀδελφός," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1.144-146). Nor can the *in the flesh* (ἐν σαρκί) designation easily support Callahan's literal brother theory: circumcision (Romans 2:28; Galatians 6:13; Philippians 3:3), the unregenerate life apart from Christ (Romans 7:5, 18, 8:8-10), and one's presence "in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 10:3; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:22; Colossians 1:24; 2:1, 5) are dominant contexts for the ἐν σαρκί phrase elsewhere; so why must it support Callahan's peculiar interpretation in Philemon 16? Answer: it does not have to, so the "alternative argumentum" is hardly ironclad, no matter how much supplementary material Callahan supplies. Indeed, the entire theory tests upon the most dubious of evidence—namely, well known, frequently used words in the New Testament like *brother* and *in the flesh*, which need not support the highly specialized interpretation Callahan desires here. Less partisan interpreters suggest that ἐν σαρκί in Philemon 16 denotes a "purely human relationship" (one may compare Philippians 1:22, 24) between Philemon and his restored slave, as opposed to their shared Christian identity "in the Lord" (one may compare E. Schweizer, "σάρξ," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 7:127). The following italicized words demonstrate, indeed, that Paul has been building a rhetorical contrast since 14b to distinguish two positions that he hopes, henceforth, can be reconciled in Christ:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|---|
| "by necessity" | vs. | "willingly," 14b |
| "parted from you
momentarily" | vs. | "receive him back...forever," 15 |
| "a slave as it were" | vs. | "more than a slave...a beloved brother" 16a |
| "especially to me" | vs. | "how much the more to you," 16b |
| "both in the flesh" | vs. | "and in the Lord," 16c |

So the "beloved brother" descriptor cannot be taken literally here, but is part of the expansion. Paul has been painting a "new Onesimus" since 10b and verse 16 is the climax of that description—right before Paul finally gets to the point of the letter wherein he urges Philemon to welcome Onesimus back (17b). Onesimus has been and remains a slave, to be sure, but now that he has been forgiven and restored to Christ, he is considerably more than a slave; in fact (as Paul emphasizes through the rhetorical expansion), he is Philemon's and the congregation's beloved brother in Christ!

"Slave" (δοῦλος) also can mean more than literal servant, of course (one may compare "Servant of the LORD"; "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus," and others). That Onesimus was indeed a slave, and a runaway at that, is suggested not so much by the doubled occurrence of the word δοῦλος in verse 16a, as by Paul's insistence that Philemon should welcome Onesimus (προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ, 17b), that Onesimus wronged Philemon and *owed* him something (τι ἡδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει, 18a)—vocabulary that can signify fraud or at least financial mismanagement in the extra-biblical papyri—and that Paul is so concerned about repayment that he lapses into the language of a formal *chirograph*: "credit this to [my] account" (τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλόγα, 18b); "I Paul write it with my own hand" (ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί, 19a); "I will repay!" (ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω, 19a). Just why Paul was so concerned about repayment is never revealed in the letter, but the offer to help Philemon and his household get back on their feet again financially after a runaway slave incident remains, I submit, the one most likely possibility. The point is, quite apart from its longevity as dominant interpretation in the church, the runaway slave hypothesis rests on several points within the existing text that—overall—would seem to point in that direction (as is more fully demonstrated in my 1991 article). Also, Onesimus' likely behavior outside the text quite convincingly fits the stock pattern of the criminal runaway slave that any ancient would have recognized. In this letter, therefore, Paul minimizes the (once obvious) fact that Onesimus had been a runaway slave because that reminder would have damaged Philemon's inner man and made it difficult for him to forgive Onesimus. Forgiveness and the reconciliation of former antagonists in Christ are what Philemon and the entire canon of Scripture are about, not mere brotherhood, equality, tolerance, or anything else. (Callahan writes an excursus on Paul's "I will repay," for example, in which he argues that reparations should be paid to African Americans for the past injustices of slavery, 56-62).

Callahan's estranged brothers theory rests almost completely upon that word *brother* in verse 16 and, as has been demonstrated, can easily be demolished. Hence Callahan's treatment of the problem—although quite comprehensible to current American social consciousness—would almost certainly have been lost on Paul, the earliest Christian *ekklesiae*, and Christians of every time and place, save our own. So Callahan's book seems grossly idiosyncratic and cannot be recommended.

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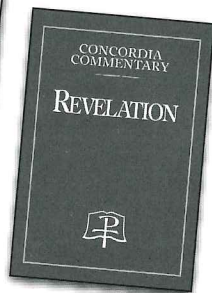
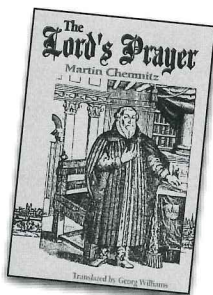
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