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Agreement and Disagreement on Justification by Faith Alone

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In 1999 the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* was signed in the city of Augsburg, Germany by the President of the Lutheran World Federation (Bishop Christian Krause), the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy), and other representatives of the two church bodies.[1] The colorful ceremony, which included a procession from the Roman Catholic Cathedral to the Lutheran Church of Saint Anna, was broadcast on television in Germany and in other countries. It was celebrated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as a milestone on the way to full eucharistic fellowship between the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic Churches.

Indeed this *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* marks a certain final point in the ecumenical discussions between the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church on this central teaching, which caused the church to split in the sixteenth century. These discussions had begun during the ecumenical awakening in the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. A joint Roman Catholic and Evangelical-Lutheran Commission was called into existence, whose members had been appointed by the Vatican and by the LWF and who started to deal with the controversial issues of the Reformation period, hoping to agree on common statements on the individual issues.[2] The results of the following

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[1]A report on the ceremony is on the Internet at "Colourful Ceremony Marks Signing of 'Joint Declaration':A Moment of Great Joy," [online] *LWF Information, 31 October 1999, [cited 23 October 2001] available from:<http://www.justification.org/Doc_6.html>.

[2]A survey of these discussions appears in Gottfried Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders: Rettungshandeln Gottes oder historisches Interpretament?: Grundentscheidungen lutherischer* Theologie *und Kirche bei der Behandlung des Themas "Rechtfertigung" im ökumenischen Kontext,* Forschungen zur systematischen und ökumenischen Theologie, Volume 64. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 177-178. See also Hans L. Martensen, "Wege und Hindernisse. Nach 21. Jahren lutherisch/römisch-katholischer Dialoge,"edited by Günther Gaßmann und Peder Nørgaard-Hojen, in *Einheit der Kirche. Neue Entwicklungen und Perspektiven; Harding Meyer zum 60. Geburtstag in Dankbarkeit und Anerkennung* (Frankfurt am Main,

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two decades were rather encouraging. This commission published very concrete and helpful documents. Besides this international commission, ecumenical commissions were formed on a national level as well, which also worked on these contested questions.

There were, however, two major insights that all these commissions gained in the course of time. First of all, they realized that it was not enough that only those theologians who participated in these discussions and were members of these commissions came to an agreement on the single topics. Rather, it was necessary to deal with the official doctrinal documents of both churches, that is, with the *Book of Concord* on the Lutheran side and with the declarations of the Roman Catholic councils on the other, especially with the doctrinal decisions of the Council of Trent. Otherwise, all ecumenical steps forward would ultimately be in vain.

Second, the members of the commissions realized that it was not enough to deal with tangential theological topics, but with the center of the conflict of the Reformation: the question of the justification of the sinner before God. Thus, the ecumenical commissions in the United States and in Germany dealt with this question of justification extensively and intensively on the basis of the official doctrinal texts of both churches. These commissions published documents in the 1980s, stating a far-reaching convergence in the understanding of justification and declaring that the mutual doctrinal condemnations of the Reformation period do not apply to the present doctrinal position of the other church. As a result the Roman Catholic Church and the LWF felt obliged to publish a joint document on justification on the world level as well, including the results of the documents that already existed and officially declaring a consensus on this matter. This declaration was written by a circle of theologians and was revised several times, on mostly Roman Catholic concerns, before it was finally published in February 1997.[3]

The Declaration begins with a preamble, in which the authors put the document into a twofold historical nexus.[4] On one hand they refer to the

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Germany: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 1988), 53-67, 53-57.

[3]One may see a survey on the development of this document in Gottfried Martens, "Ein ökumenischer Fortschritt: Anmerkungen zur 'Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre,'" *Lutherische Beiträge* 3 (1998): 164-187 and Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders*, 165-166.

[4]The text of the *Joint Declaration* (JD) is on the Internet at: *Joint Declaration on the*

importance of the doctrine of justification in the conflicts between the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran Churches in the sixteenth century. These conflicts find expression in the official doctrinal condemnations on both sides, which are "still valid today and thus have a church-dividing effect," as the document explicitly declares.[5] On the other hand this *Declaration* is appraised as a certain settlement of the ecumenical dialogue of the last twenty-five years concerning this topic. After the dialogue reports showed a "a high degree of agreement in their approaches and conclusions" according to the authors of the *Declaration*, this *Joint Declaration* set a twofold task for itself.[6] First, the *Declaration* wanted to report about the results that had been reached, and second it wanted to make possible a binding reception of these results by the churches. The information should take place "with the necessary accuracy and brevity," as the authors express it.[7] Thus, the *Joint Declaration* is explicitly "not a new, independent presentation," but rather it falls back on the results of former dialogues and summarizes them.[8] Thus, this *Joint Declaration* could never be a real "breakthrough" in substance or even a theological sensation, as it was appraised by certain theologians.[9] Only the attempt of an official reception of the dialogue results compiled in the document could be regarded as such a breakthrough, if it were crowned with success. One has to concede, however, that the *Joint Declaration* itself changes its tone of presentation in the course of the document, praising itself after this rather sober introduction at the end as a "decisive step forward on the way to overcoming the division of the church."[10] This bold assertion should encourage us to study the document with special alertness.

It is remarkable that the *Joint Declaration* distinctly defines itself in the preamble as a consensus document. It not only states a relative approximation of two different traditions, a so-called convergence, as in other ecumenical dialogue reports, but it expressly says that the subscribing churches "are now able to articulate a common

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Doctrine of Justification. [online] Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1997 [cited 23 October 2001]. Available from: http://www.justification.org/joint_eng.htm.

[5] JD § 1.
[6] JD § 4.
[7] JD § 4.
[8] JD § 6.
[9] One may see Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders*, 177.
[10] JD § 44.

understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ."[11] Accordingly it is stated that the *Joint Declaration* encompasses "a consensus on basic truths on the doctrine of justification."[12] Therefore each part of the explication of the common understanding of justification in the document begins with the words "We confess together."[13] Thus, the *Joint Declaration* is, according to its own understanding, a confessional document with all the weight resulting from such an assessment.

The preamble concludes with some short, but very significant, remarks about the understanding of history that lies behind the *Joint Declaration*. It claims the history of the church develops from bad to better and "new insights" — whatever might be meant by them — accrue to the churches, enabling them to overcome former differences and divisions.[14]

The first main part of the document sets forth the biblical message of justification. Repeatedly, it uses words such as "various" and "diverse" in these paragraphs.[15] Statements and terms, which lie on totally different levels according to our Lutheran understanding, are put side by side in order to form a picture of a great spectrum of the biblical witness, in which both denominations can detect their own doctrinal concerns. A structuring of the numerous biblical quotations does not take place. A more precise analysis of the quotations even shows that certain core statements concerning the topic of justification in the New Testament are not mentioned at all, as this paper will demonstrate.

The second main part states "a consensus on basic truths concerning the doctrine of justification" with reference to the results of the ecumenical dialogue since the Second Vatican Council.[16] The third main part of the document describes this consensus. The word "basic" must be underlined for this consensus in basic truths is placed opposite "differing explications in particular statements," which might show a certain discrepancy, but are nevertheless "compatible" with this consensus in basic truths.[17]

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[11] JD § 5.
[12] JD § 5.
[13] One may see JD §§ 19, 22, 25 and so forth
[14] JD § 7.
[15] One may see especially JD §§ 8, 9.
[16] JD § 13.
[17] JD § 14.

The document moves on to explicate these basic truths concerning the doctrine of justification in a trinitarian way. Justification is described as the work of the triune God. After that, it adds a consensus formulation, which originates from an ecumenical document about the *Augsburg Confession* published already in 1980.[18] Thus, the core formulation of the *Joint Declaration* is not new at all, but has already been in use for twenty years and was already used before the first ecumenical documents that dealt specifically with the doctrine of justification were published. In this consensus formulation, both sides confess that the first justification takes place by grace alone and complete this confession with a reference to the renewing action of the Holy Spirit.[19] However, the relationship of the effects of this renewing work of the Holy Spirit to the confession of justification by grace alone is not recognizable. The following explication of this consensus formulation does not clarify this relationship either.

In this third main part one finds statements about the function and the ranking of the doctrine of justification within the whole of the biblical witness and Christian doctrine. At first the Lutherans had succeeded in placing this theme into the context of the statements about the common understanding of justification. Thus, this theme received special importance and attention. In the last redaction, however, the text of the *Joint Declaration* was changed once more under pressure from the Roman Catholic side. Now, in this final proposal, justification is no longer declared to be the indispensable criterion, which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ, as in the earlier proposal, or, to express it in Lutheran terminology, the article by which the church stands or falls.[20] Rather it is only called a criterion, as the Roman Catholics "see themselves as bound by several criteria" and are not able to concede this decisive importance to the article of justification.[21]

Whereas the explanation of the common confession of the basic truths of justification turns out to be rather brief, the explication of the common

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[18]One may see Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders*, 178, note 62.

[19]One may see JD § 15.

[20]One may see Eberhard Jüngel, "Um Gottes willen - Klarheit! Kritische Bemerkungen zurVerharmlosung der kriteriologischen Funktion des Rechtfertigungsartikels - aus Anlaß in der ökumenischenGemeinsamen Erklarung zur Rechtfertigungslehre," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 94 (1997): 394-406, 395.

[21]JD § 18.

understanding of justification in a fourth main part of the *Declaration* is quite detailed. This longest part of the document deals with seven points of controversy. They are: 1) Human powerlessness and sin in relation to justification (the question of man's cooperation in the process of justification); 2) Justification as forgiveness of sins and making righteous (the question of the relationship between the declaration of God's forgiveness and God's renewing work in men's lives); 3) Justification by faith and through grace (the question of the function of faith in justification); 4) The justified as sinner (the question as to whether the justified person remains a sinner after his justification and whether he is therefore righteous and sinner at the same time); 5) Law and gospel (a theme which had unfortunately been left out of consideration in the former dialogue documents, even though it is of central importance in considering justification); 6) Assurance of salvation (the question of whether the Christian can be certain of his salvation in spite of his sinfulness); and 7) The question of the good works of the justified and which function these good works have in preserving the justification that has been received (how far these good works are meritorious, after all).

When one compares the treatment of these seven controversial issues with the treatment of the problems in former ecumenical documents, one has to concede that the treatment in the *Joint Declaration* is more clearly arranged and more systematic than before and that above all the real points of controversy are actually named in these seven points. The method by which the single issues are treated in the document is the same in all seven points. At the beginning, there is a paragraph containing a common confession concerning the theme of the respective issue. Two more paragraphs follow, in which the respective concerns of the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics regarding the question are named and explicated. In doing this the doctrinal differences that become apparent in this explication are automatically declared to be complementary "concerns" of both sides.[22] Therefore, because they are just "concerns," they are not able to call the contended basic consensus into question. This procedure is the fundamental ecumenical method that is applied in the treatment of every single issue and which is explicitly described at the beginning of the last main part of the document about the "Significance and Scope of the Consensus Reached."[23] The results of the

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[22]One may see, for example, JD § 36.
[23]JD part 5.

preceding ecumenical documents concerning justification depended on this ecumenical method, too. Thus, it has proved to be very effective.

In the first paragraph of this last main part one also finds the central and oft-repeated statement "that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics."[24] Notice, however, that this statement refers to the third main part of the document, that is, essentially to the consensus formula of 1980 and that in view of this formulation the differences that are explicated in the fourth main part are regarded to be "acceptable."[25] These differences are just various "explications of justification" that "are in their difference open to one another. "[26]

Therefore the *Joint Declaration* finally states that the doctrinal condemnations of the one church do not apply to the respective teaching of the other as it is presented in this document. Thus, the doctrinal condemnations keep their function merely as "salutary warnings."[27] Besides, the *Joint Declaration* underlines that this consensus has to have consequences in other areas of the doctrine and the life of the church. It specifies several topics "which need further clarification," so that the aim of the visible unity of the church, which is declared in the document to be Christ's will, might be reached.[28]

The final paragraph of the document shows the importance the authors ascribe to it. Here they solemnly declare: "We give thanks to the Lord for this decisive step forward on the way to overcoming the division of the church."[29] Thus, the result of the document is interpreted as the will and work of God himself. A rejection of this document would, therefore, mean disobedience against God's will and work. The fierce reactions supporting or rejecting this *Joint Declaration* after its publication are more understandable, if one considers this assessment of the document.

As mentioned above, the two church bodies were not content simply with publishing another theological document on the issue of justification. Rather, they wanted this *Declaration* to be officially accepted

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[24]JD § 40.
[25]JD § 40.
[26]JD § 40.
[27]JD § 42.
[28]JD § 43.
[29]JD § 44.

by both church bodies. Thus, this *Declaration* would be more binding than all the other documents that had been published before. The problem, however, was how the Lutheran side could officially accept such a document as an expression of its own faith. While the Vatican could decide matters very easily, the LWF was forced to ask all its member churches to approve of this document in their synods. Thus, the LWF asked its member churches to do so by May 1, 1998. Up to this deadline only sixty-six of the 122 member churches had given an answer. Moreover, there were several member churches who could not agree to the statements contained in this document "that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics" and that the "condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this Declaration."[30] In Germany especially there was a passionate discussion between supporters and critics of this *Declaration*.[31] While the bishops and other church leaders eagerly voted in favor of the *Declaration*, trying to move the synods of the single territorial churches in Germany to accept the statements mentioned above, not least for reasons of church politics, a growing group of theology professors opposed the *Declaration* because of theological concerns. More than 160 of them signed an open letter warning the bishops and synods not to accept the *Declaration*, as this acceptance would mean the sacrifice of the central doctrine of the Lutheran Reformation in favor of the decisions of the Council of Trent. The Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (*Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche*), which does not belong to the LWF, published a statement as well, saying that the real differences in the issue of justification had not been solved in the document, but were rather disguised.[32] Finally the majority of the synods of the Lutheran territorial churches in Germany passed votes that could be interpreted in various directions, enabling the LWF to count them as votes in favor of the statements of the *Declaration*. Thus, the LWF finally decided in June 1998 that the consensus among the Lutheran churches in favor of the

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[30]JD § 40-41.

[31]One may see a survey on these discussions in Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders*, 164-170.

[32]One may see Stellungnahme der Selbständigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche zur, "Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre" (Römisch-katholische Kirche–Lutherischer Weltbund), *Lutherische Beiträge* 3 (1998): 188-195. Hereafter cited as *SELK-Stellungnahme*.

Declaration was sufficient in order to be able to subscribe to this document and celebrated its own decision as a "historical moment for our two churches."[33]

However, the enthusiasm that was expressed by the representatives of the LWF lasted for only a short time. On June 25, 1998, the anniversary date of the *Augsburg Confession*, the Roman Catholic Church published its official response, prepared by common agreement between the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.[34] It stated that even though the *Joint Declaration* "represents a significant progress in mutual understanding" and "shows that there are many points of convergence" the Roman Catholic side "cannot yet speak of a consensus." The authors of the response then added "a list of points that constitute still an obstacle to agreement between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on all the fundamental truths concerning justification."[35] The first and most weighty point for the Roman Catholic side was the Lutheran view of the justified as sinner: "from a Catholic point of view the title is already a cause of perplexity," the authors declared. They continued that "it remains difficult to see how, in the current state of the presentation, given in the *Joint Declaration*, we can say that this doctrine on *simul iustus et peccator* is not touched by the anathemas of the Tridentine decree on original sin and justification."[36] Other obstacles mentioned in the list were the importance of justification as criterion for the life and practice of the church[37] and the challenge of man's cooperation in justification by the Lutheran view that man receives justification merely passively and that good works are not explicitly called "the fruit of man, justified and interiorly transformed."[38] The list

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[33]One may see Gottfried Martens, "Der Rettungsversuch. Zur Unterzeichnung der 'Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre' in Augsburg," *Lutherische Beiträge* 4 (1999): 263-275; Martens,*Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders*, 263.

[34]The official response to the *Joint Declaration* is on the Internet at *Response of the Catholic Church to the Joint Declaration of The Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation On the Doctrine of Justification*. [online] Vatican City: Ponitfical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 1998 [cited 12 November 2001]. Available from: <www.justification.org/of_cat_risp.htm>.

[35]All quotations are taken from the *Declaration* at the beginning of the *Response*.

[36]"Clarifications," in *Response*, § 1.

[37]One may see "Clarifications," in *Response*, § 2.

[38]"Clarifications," in *Response*, § 3.

also refers to the sacrament of penance which is "not . . . sufficiently" treated in the *Joint Declaration*.[39] In view of all these points the Roman Catholic side was not able "to affirm that all the differences separating Catholics and Lutherans in the doctrine concerning justification are simply a question of emphasis or language. Some of these differences concern aspects of substance and are therefore not all mutually compatible, as affirmed on the contrary" in the *Joint Declaration*.[40] The response ended with a reference to the ecclesiological relevance of the document, that is, the way the LWF tried to reach a magnus consensus by consulting the single synods of its member churches: "there remains, however, the question of the real authority of such a synodical consensus, today and also tomorrow, in the life and doctrine of the Lutheran community."[41] Here the Roman Catholic Church rather openly expressed what had already been mentioned in a footnote in the document itself that the Roman Catholic side was not able to regard the Lutheran Churches as real churches in the full meaning of this word.[42] Thus, the authors of the response intentionally avoided calling the Lutheran Church a church and rather spoke of "the Lutheran community."

The dismay of the representatives of the LWF, especially of the German Lutheran bishops who had tried so hard to talk the synods into approving this *Joint Declaration* and who had so harshly criticized the opposition of the theology professors, is easily imaginable. Now the Roman Catholic Church itself was making it clear that these professors had been right in their criticism and this made the bishops aghast. In one of the first reactions, the General Secretary of the LWF tried to underline the positive aspects of Rome's answers, but even he conceded that by this response of the Roman Catholic Church the basis on which it could be commonly declared that the doctrinal condemnations of the Reformation period did not apply anymore had become unclear. Horst Hirschler, the leading bishop of the Lutheran territorial churches in Germany, expressed it even more starkly by saying that, through this response, a grave change had taken place. If the statements in this response could not be straightened

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[39]"Clarifications," in *Response*, § 4.

[40]"Clarifications," in *Response* , § 5.

[41]"Clarifications," in *Response*, § 6.

[42]One may see JD, note 9: "The word 'church' is used in this *Declaration* to reflect the self-understandings of the participating churches, without intending to resolve all the ecclesiological issues related to this term."

out by official interpretations, then the aim of the *Joint Declaration* has not been reached.[43]

After the first shock, both sides tried to find a way out of this dilemma; this was especially true of the Roman Catholic side. Cardinal Cassidy wrote a letter to Dr. Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the LWF, interpreting the response as an approval of the *Joint Declaration*, in spite of certain objections. Even though he stated once more that the Roman Catholic Church was not able to declare that the doctrine of the *simul iustus et peccator* does not incur the condemnations of the Council of Trent, he indicated that the Roman Catholic Church was willing to sign the document as an expression of good will.[44] This was, however, not acceptable for the LWF in view of the theological objections against the Lutheran position mentioned in the Roman Catholic answer. A subscription to the *Declaration* under these circumstances would have meant the death of the document. Thus, the two church bodies agreed to draft an additional document, a so-called *Official Common Statement with an Annex* that sought to clarify the contested questions mentioned in the Roman Catholic answer. This *Common Statement* was finally presented to the public in June 1999. At the same time the date of the subscription ceremony was announced.[45]

The *Official Common Statement* itself is a very short text, consisting of three points. The first and most important point emphasizes the statement of the *Joint Declaration* that the teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in the *Declaration* does not fall under the condemnations of the Council of Trent.[46] The Roman Catholic response had questioned this statement. The assertion "that the earlier mutual doctrinal condemnations do not apply to the teaching of the dialogue partners as presented in the *Joint Declaration*" is substantiated by an

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[43]One may see Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders,* 266.

[44]One may see Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders,* 266 and following.

[45]The Official Common Statement with the Annex is on the Internet at *Official Common Statement by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church and Annex.* [online] **Geneva: Lutheran World Federation,** 1998 [cited 12 November 2001]. Available from <www.justification.org/gof_engl.htm>. Hereafter cited as CS for the *Common Statement* and *Annex* for the *Annex.*

[46]One may see CS § 1.

Annex dealing with the questions especially mentioned in the Roman Catholic response.[47]

The *Annex* consists of four parts. The first part merely repeats what had been said before about the consensus reached in the *Joint Declaration* and announces an elucidation of this consensus.[48] The second part, which is the real center of the *Annex*, is subdivided into five points, taking up the Roman Catholic concerns mentioned above. The third part deals with the question of the criteriological function of the doctrine of justification. The fourth part addresses to the question of authority in the process of ecclesial decisions, taking up the remarks of the Roman Catholic response concerning the procedure of synodical consultations in the LWF.

Some positive surprises may be found in the explication of the five controversial points in the second part of the *Annex*. It states that "Lutherans and Catholics can together understand the Christian as *simul justus et peccator*;" justification takes place "by faith alone;" and Romans 3:28 is a proof text that "the person is justified 'apart from works.'"[49] God's final judgment, which rarely appeared in the *Joint Declaration*, is now dealt with, and there are even three new references to the text of the *Formula of Concord*. Thus, at first glance, it seems as if this *Annex* is much more Lutheran than the *Joint Declaration* itself.

Upon closer examination, however, one finds the opposite true. There are not only the same unsolved problems that are in the *Joint Declaration*, but there is a clear shift in favor of the concerns of the Roman Catholic side expressed in its response of June 25, 1998. Thus, the *simul justus et peccator* is interpreted in a good Tridentine way, so that the explication says exactly the opposite of what this formula originally meant, namely, that the Christian is righteous and sinner at the same time, because he is inwardly renewed and endangered by the power of sin.

The same is true the treatment of the concept of concupiscence, where the Lutherans finally accept the Roman Catholic thinking that concupiscence is a desire which "can become the opening through which sin attacks."[50] The Lutherans even accept the Roman Catholic understanding of sin as having a "personal character," a statement that

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[47]CS § 2.
[48]One may see *Annex* § 1.
[49]*Annex* § 2 A, C.
[50]*Annex* § 2 B.

was qualified as typically Roman Catholic in the *Joint Declaration* itself![51] Even though the last judgment is mentioned in the *Annex*, the decisive question is left open here as well: who or what will finally rescue man in this final judgment? The quotations from the *Formula of Concord* mentioned in the *Annex* take on a totally different meaning when they are put into the Roman Catholic concept of justification as a process, instead of being interpreted in the context of the dialectic of law and gospel and of an imputative understanding of justification.[52] Thus, the authors of the *Annex* actually succeed in veiling the fact that the Roman Catholic doctrine of good works preserving the justifying grace is explicitly condemned in the *Formula of Concord* when it says: "Since it is evident from the word of God that faith is the proper and the only means whereby righteousness and salvation are not only received but also preserved by God, we rightly reject the decree of the Council of Trent and anything else that tends toward the same opinion, namely, that our good works preserve salvation, or that our works either entirely or in part sustain and preserve either the righteousness of faith that we have received or even faith itself. "[53] There is not a hint in either the text of the *Joint Declaration* or of the *Annex* as to why this rejection could not be applied to the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church today.

The third part of the *Annex* addresses the question of the criteriological function of justification once more. The text of the final proposal of the *Joint Declaration* had been harshly criticized by Lutheran theologians because justification was called merely a criterion among others orienting all the teaching and practice of the churches and not *the* criterion. Now, in the *Annex*, both sides simply dispense with the article altogether. Justification is the "measure and touchstone for the Christian faith."[54] A bit later, however, the statement of the *Joint Declaration* is repeated that the doctrine of justification is an indispensable criterion.[55] The last part, finally, deals with the irritations caused by the remarks in the Roman Catholic response concerning the authority of doctrinal decisions in the

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[51]*Annex* § 2 B. One may see JD § 30.

[52]One may see Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders,* 272.

[53]The Formula of Concord, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church,* translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959) 557:35. Hereafter the work is abbreviated Tappert and the paragraph is cited according to standard Lutheran practice (for example, FC SD IV, 35).

[54]*Annex* § 3.

[55]One may see *Annex* § 3.

Lutheran Churches. Of course, the text does not deal with the real challenge of the Roman Catholic side, whether the Lutheran church is a church at all. Instead it notes that in the dialogue itself the two sides have treated each other as partners and respect "the other partner's ordered process of reaching doctrinal decisions."[56] This respect does not mean an acknowledgment, however, as Lutheran commentators said afterward.[57] This last paragraph was just an expression of ecclesial politeness.

The public presentation of this *Official Common Statement* with its *Annex* on June 11, 1999 provoked even stronger protests in Germany. More than 240 theology professors protested against it, as did many other pastors and theologians, mainly for two reasons.[58] First, they criticized the fact that this new document was only approved by the representatives of the LWF in Geneva, but not by the individual member churches, making the LWF seem like a kind of super church, a Lutheran Vatican.[59] Second, they criticized the fact that in the *Annex* the Lutheran side accepted the teachings of the Council of Trent even more frankly than in the *Joint Declaration* itself. A Roman doctrine of justification was taught in this document by using Lutheran expressions. This became even more apparent when an interview given by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger was published, in which the chief theologian of the Vatican very frankly described how this new statement came into being and how it was to be understood by the Roman Catholics. He praised this *Common Statement*, because in this document the two sides had made a real progress towards the Roman Catholic position. He clearly explained how the interpretation of the *simul justus et peccator* in the *Annex* was to be understood: "If somebody is not just, then he is not justified." That is, of course, the traditional Roman Catholic position. Ratzinger continued to say: "The truth and the value of the excommunications of Trent remains valid. Only if the Lutheran doctrine of justification is explained in a way that complies with this measure, it is not affected by these excommunications. For he who opposes the doctrine of the Council of Trent, opposes the

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[56]*Annex* § 4.

[57]One may see Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders*, 273, note 60.

[58]One may see "Kritik: Mehr Kritik an Gemeinsamer Erklärung. Ein Brief skandinavischer und amerikanischer Hochschullehrer," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (December 22, 1999): 298.

[59]One may see Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders*, 267 and following, with notes 27 and 28.

doctrine and the faith of the Church."[60] Even these unmistakable words of the Cardinal and all the protests could not prevent the representatives of the LWF from finally signing this highly disputed document.[61] The quarrel about the document did not cease, however, even after the official ceremony. In a letter to Cardinal Cassidy, a group of Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and American theology professors harshly criticized the *Joint Declaration* and the *Annex* of the *Common Statement*, warning the Roman Catholic side not to regard these texts as an adequate expression of the Lutheran faith or even as a binding document for Lutheran churches.[62] Thus, it is doubtful what significance this *Joint Declaration* will actually have in the future.

The texts themselves will be soon forgotten and, at best, the result of this *Declaration* will be kept in mind that allegedly all major differences in this focal question between Lutherans and Roman Catholics have been overcome. This would be a shame, of course, because the most positive result of this whole discussion, with its very unsatisfactory outcome, has been that the matter of justification itself has been discussed in churches, congregations and, at least superficially, also in the public. It would be very regrettable if this discussion would be over now, if the doctrine of justification would be regarded again as just a historical remnant, and if Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger would be right in stating that the Lutherans themselves are only very insufficiently able to answer the question of what justification is all about and that they would be willing to deal with this topic very tranquilly in the ecumenical discussions.[63]

Think once more about this very question of what justification is all about. Formulating three theses might help not only to recognize the basic weaknesses of the ecumenical documents concerning this issue, but also to reposition this question as the center of pastoral ministry.

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[60]One may see the quotations in Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders,* 268, note 28; 270, notes 40 and 42; 271, note 48; 274, notes 63 and 64.

[61]One may see also the statement of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany concerning the CS, "Stellungnahme der SELK zur "Gemeinsamen Offiziellen Feststellung des Lutherischen Weltbundes und der römisch-katholischen Kirche" samt 'Anhang' zur 'Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre,'" *SELK-Informationen* 27 (October 1999): 237:3-5.

[62]One may see "Kritik: Mehr Kritik an Gemeinsamer Erklärung," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (December 22,1999).

[63]One may see the quotation in Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders,* 274, note 63.

1. Justification takes place in the sermon, in the means of grace through God's twofold acting in law and gospel.

Justification is something that takes place. Justification is not a theological theory, but is something that actually happens. It is the basic event in the church.[64] The living God Himself is the subject of justification. He acts in justification by killing the old Adam through the law and raising him to new life through the gospel. Thus, this real dialectic of God's twofold acting in law and gospel is not a special theme among others in the area of justification; it is the way in which justification actually takes place. It is impossible to speak adequately about justification beyond this framework of law and gospel. In other words, the dialectic of law and gospel is not a Lutheran theory, but a catholic doctrine in the best sense of this word. If Lutherans agree to the view that the dialectic of law and gospel is a Lutheran specialty, then we have already given up the core of our proclamation. This is exactly the basic erroneous decision that was made in the *Joint Declaration*, as well as in other ecumenical documents concerning that topic of justification. In all these documents the authors try to abstract the description of justification from this basic dialectic of law and gospel. The result is always the same: one automatically gets caught in the track of the decisions of the Council of Trent. Without this basic structure of law and gospel, justification can only be described as a process, just as the Council of Trent does. It is a process that is started, of course, by God's grace, in which, however, the human will and human cooperation evermore become a problematic factor so that the first justification, happening in baptism, and the word of forgiveness that is heard by the person who is justified, are by no means identical with his final acceptance in the divine judgment.[65] Thus, there can be no assurance of salvation for the believer; he can never be sure how he will behave during this process of justification until the end.

It is therefore not only a formal preliminary decision, but a preliminary decision in substance, when in the *Joint Declaration*, too, this Roman view of justification as a process is not only accepted as a legitimate way of looking at and describing justification, but when this description of process is taken as the basis of the document, because it is much more practically handled. Of course, it seems to be near at hand to compare the

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[64]One may see Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders,* 23 and following.
[65]One may see Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders,* 83-86.

single phenomena of this process between the two churches, sin and grace, and faith and good works, and so on. Structural parallels can be found between the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic view; but nevertheless, the whole description and the whole result will remain totally unsatisfactory, because the very basis of an adequate description of what is happening in justification has been left when the dialectic of law and gospel, of this twofold acting of God, has been put away beforehand.

The best proof for this is the treatment of the description of the Christian as *simul justus et peccator* in the *Joint Declaration* and the *Annex* of the *Common Statement*. In the *Joint Declaration* the description of the Lutheran position was not so bad, after all. The Lutherans had stated:

> Believers are totally righteous, in that God forgives their sins through word and sacrament and grants the righteousness of Christ which they appropriate in faith. In Christ, they are made just before God. Looking at themselves through the law, however, they recognize that they remain also totally sinners. Sin still lives in them . . . , for they repeatedly turn to false gods and do not love God with that undivided love which God requires as their Creator . . . . This contradiction to God is as such truly sin.[66]

This statement, however, would finally not be accepted at all by the Roman Catholic side, which stated

> The major difficulties preventing an affirmation of total consensus between the parties on the theme of Justification arise in paragraph 4.4. *The Justified as Sinner* . . . . According . . . to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, in baptism everything that is really sin is taken away, and so, in those who are born anew there is nothing that is hateful to God . . . . For Catholics, therefore, the formula *'at the same time righteous and sinner,'* as it is explained at the beginning of n. 29 is not acceptable. This statement does not, in fact, seem compatible with the renewal and sanctification of the interior man of which the Council of Trent speaks . . . . it remains difficult to see how, in the current state of the presentation, given in the *Joint Declaration*, we can say that this doctrine on *'simul justus et peccator'* is not touched by the

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[66]JD § 29.

anathemas of the Tridentine decree on original sin and justification.[67]

Here is the classical dilemma: As soon as one ceases to deal with justification on the basis of the dialectic of law and gospel, the doctrine of the *simul justus et peccator* becomes meaningless, and seems even to be heretical. How did the two sides try to solve this dilemma? They avoided dealing with this actual decisive point, but preferred rather to reinterpret the *simul justus et peccator* in a Roman Catholic sense. Thus, the Lutherans could say that the Roman Catholics had accepted their formula, and the Roman Catholics could be content because the Lutherans had accepted their Tridentine interpretation. Thus, in the *Annex* to the *Common Statement*, they write: "We are truly and inwardly renewed by the action of the Holy Spirit, remaining always dependent on his work in us . . . . The justified do not remain sinners in this sense."[68] Thus, in this interpretation of the *simul justus*, justification and interior renewal are equated for the very purpose of making the formula acceptable to the Roman side. The *Annex* continues: "Together we hear the exhortation 'Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions' (Romans 6:12). This recalls to us the persisting danger which comes from the power of sin and its action in Christians. To this extent, Lutherans and Catholics can together understand the Christian as *simul justus et peccator*."[69] "To this extent" means that Lutherans and Roman Catholics can only agree on sin as being a danger to the Christian, not as an actual qualification of the Christian after his baptism, too. Thus, the real meaning of the *simul justus et peccator* is turned into its opposite, because it is taken from the context of law and gospel. It is unbelievable that Lutheran theologians were actually willing to accept this false solution!

This unwillingness of the Roman Catholic side to accept the description of the Christian as *simul justus et peccator* is, in the last analysis, caused by a different understanding of the reality of justification. According to Roman Catholic thinking, the reality of justification is finally an ethical quantity and one-dimensional.[70] The Christian is really justified because he is liberated from sin, inwardly renewed, and enabled to do good

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[67]"Clarifications," in Response, § 1.
[68]*Annex*, § 2 A.
[69]*Annex*, § 2 A.
[70]One may see Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders*, 86.

works. It is impossible that a Christian is a sinner and a righteous, justified person at the same time.

According to the teaching of the Lutheran church, the reality of justification consists solely in the word of forgiveness that is proclaimed to the Christian. He is really just, because God says that he is really just. For God's word is not a mere piece of information, but it is effective, creating a new reality that is not an ethical category, even though it will have its effect in the good works of the justified. These good works do not constitute, however, this reality and cannot call this reality of justification into question. Therefore it is obvious that a Christian can be and actually is *simul justus et peccator*, because the reality of his sin and the reality of his justice cannot be compensated against each other. In the *Joint Declaration* this different understanding of reality, this different theological ontology, is not reflected at all.[71] The consequence of this is that the Roman Catholic understanding of reality is at least silently accepted. What does it mean, for example, when it is said that the baptized person is justified and truly renewed? Or when justification is defined as "forgiveness of sins and making righteous"?[72] As soon as this Roman Catholic understanding of reality is accepted, an understanding of justification as process appears, with all the consequences mentioned above. If, however, one really accepts the thesis that justification takes place in the sermon, through the proclamation of the gospel, and that this word of the gospel effects what it says, then one cannot accept these presuppositions upon which the Roman Catholic argumentation is based.[73]

Another point where the consequences of the preliminary decisions that have already been described can be observed is the question of the so-called "personality" of sin and faith. For Roman Catholic thinking, justification is a process in which the empirically describable human being with his free will remains in a continuum. Sin is an act of the free will of man, and faith is an act of the free will of man as well, after it is

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[71]One may see Gottfried Martens, "Statt einer Erwiderung," *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* 14 (1990): 85.

[72]One may see JD § 4.2.

[73]One may see Gottfried Martens, "'Einig in Sachen Rechtfertigung'–Wo liegt der Haken? Zur Diskussion um das Rechtfertigungskapitel des Dokuments 'Lehrverurteilungen–kirchentrennend,'" *Lutherische Theologie and Kirche* 13 (1989): 166-174, 170 and following.

empowered to perform this act by the gracious help of God. This so-called "personality" of sin and faith is an important concern for Roman Catholic theology, based on its understanding of the relationship of nature and grace. According to Lutheran theology, however, there is no continuity between the old man who is condemned and killed by the law and the new man who is created by the gospel. The law reveals that man is not only a sinner when he willingly does something wrong, but that by the consequences of original sin the very center of his being is corrupted and is placed under God's judgment. The gospel, however, does not only empower this old man to do better in the future; but it rather creates a totally new man who is not simply an improved version of the old one. The quarrel between the old and the new man in us will, however, not cease until death. When, on the other hand, the Lutherans state in the *Joint Declaration* that "believers are fully involved personally in their faith," and when they claim in the *Annex* of the *Common Statement* that sin "has a personal character," then they leave God's twofold acting in law and gospel out of consideration once more, thereby yielding to the Roman Catholic ontology and understanding of justification as a continual process.[74]

Justification takes place in the sermon, in the means of grace through God's twofold acting in law and gospel. We have seen the far-reaching consequences of this statement. The basic presupposition in this statement is that justification is something that actually takes place and is not just a theological theory or the result of a historical development. Only on this basis does it make any sense at all to discuss this central content of Christian proclamation or to express the same in Latin.[75] This is, of course, another fundamental problem of all these ecumenical documents concerning the doctrine of justification. They are based on this concept of justification as a theological or confessional theory that can be analyzed in its historical emergence and that can, accordingly, be relativized in view of its historical conditionality. On this basis one could also work with the concept that there are two different theological traditions, both of which are developing over time and moving toward the higher aim of Christian unity. This concept is developed very successfully in the *Joint Declaration* as well. It agrees with this basic presupposition of justification as a theological theory. When one

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[74]JD § 21; *Annex* § 2 B.

[75]One may see Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders,* 23 and following.

proceeds, however, from the insight that justification is an act of God, something that actually takes place in every divine service where the means of grace are distributed, then one understands that justification is not a confessional theory, but a catholic event and that the decisive question is not how this or that theological concept has developed, but rather who or what is preached to the Christian congregation as the only rescue in God's final judgment. This leads us to the second thesis.

2. Justification means the rescue of the sinner in the last judgment

There is obviously a serious difference in the approach concerning justification between the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran sides. But is it not true, nevertheless, that these differences are merely differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification? Is it not possible that the phenomenological description of justification used by the Roman Catholic side and in the *Joint Declaration*, as well as the description of justification in the framework of the dialectic of law and gospel, come to the same result in the end? The decisive question is: who or what will finally save me in the last judgment?

If one expects to find an answer to this question in the *Joint Declaration* or in the *Annex* to the *Common Statement*, one will be bitterly disappointed. With lots of elegant formulations included, the authors of these papers succeed in avoiding this decisive question. Again and again they rightly emphasize that justification means forgiveness of sin and being declared righteous, that justification and true internal renewal belong inseparably together, just as do faith and love. They do not say, however, the importance this internal renewal and the good works of the believer will finally have in this last judgment, because they do not deal with the last judgment at all in the *Joint Declaration*. In the *Annex* they seem to compensate for this absence in paragraph E: "We face a judgement."[76] Yet, the task of this judgment is obviously not to decide whether a person is sentenced to eternal death or whether eternal life is granted to him. Rather, the task is to approve or disapprove of certain deeds in our lives, a kind of trial jury.

On the one hand, this very cleverly obscures the real difference between the two churches that would emerge, if this question were answered openly. As long as the final judgment does not enter the picture, one can

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[76]*Annex* § 2 E.

say many nice things about the unity of faith and love and about the process of justification. If one deals earnestly with the last judgment, however, then one has to say whether a lack of good works can prevent one from entering eternal life, or whether the acquittal in the last judgment is based only on Christ and His work, on God's own word spoken in Holy Absolution, or on something else in the believer. And then one must also deal with the question of whether there can be something like assurance of salvation based on the word of Holy Absolution or not. In the *Joint Declaration*, the Roman Catholic side is not able to affirm this. The believer can only be certain that God desires his salvation; he should not doubt God's mercy and Christ's merit and may be sure of His grace. But he cannot be certain of his salvation, as his human weakness will be a factor in the final judgment as well.[77] This last statement, however, is covered by a smokescreen again in the *Declaration*. The paper only speaks of salvation in this context, but does not mention the final judgment at all. Thus, the question of assurance of salvation—as a matter of fact the central question of Luther's reformatory breakthrough—is dealt within the document as a subjective concern of the Lutheran side and not as the central issue that tests the soundness of the alleged agreement.

It is not, however, merely a clever move to de-emphasize the question of the last judgment in order to allow the Lutheran side to accept the Roman Catholic way of describing justification. It is also an expression of what is actually preached in the churches today. Rescue in the last judgment is, to a large extent, regarded as an antiquated question of medieval man, which is of no interest for the man of today. Therefore, the judicial forum is changed. Instead of proclaiming the acquittal in the last judgment, preachers today prefer to speak of acceptance and self-acceptance, preaching that one is allowed to accept himself because he is accepted by God or that one need not justify himself for what he has done, because God has already justified him.[78] This is not totally wrong, to be sure. But if the last judgment is removed as the real point of

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[77]One may see JD § 36.

[78]One may see Gottfried Martens, "Glaubensgewißheit oder Daseinsgewißheit? Bemerkungen zu Auftrag und Ziel der Rechtfertigungsverkündigung der Kirche," in Wolfhart Schlichting, editor, *Rechtfertigung and Weltverantwortung. Internationale Konsultation Neuendettelsau* 9.-12.September 1991. *Berichte and Referate. Herausgegeben im Auftrag der Gesellschaft für Innere and Äußere Mission im Sinne der Lutherischen Kirche* (Neuendettelsau 1993), 171-179.

reference in speaking about justification, the whole proclamation of justification is empty, replacing the rescue from eternal death with a mildly religious version of popular psychological small talk, that is, "I'm okay–you're okay."

This unwillingness to speak of justification in view of the last judgment, this fading out of the eschatological dimension of justification, was already one basic cause for the failure of the LWF 1963 in Helsinki to express what justification actually means. There were, of course, many reasons that finally led to the disaster that the Assembly of the LWF was not able to approve of a common document on justification. That disaster was interpreted by observers from all over the world and by the media as a sign that the Lutherans themselves did not know anymore what justification actually meant and that they no longer agreed about the very core of their own proclamation.

Of course, there were many technical reasons that led to this failure, as well. But the decisive substantial reason for this failure was a conflict that was already apparent in the preparatory work of the Commission on Theology.[79] In this commission it was Peter Brunner who again and again pointed out that you cannot adequately speak of justification without this eschatological horizon of the last judgment. Brunner was certainly the most active participant in this commission, submitting one paper and draft after another as a basis for the discussion in Helsinki. But the more he stressed the importance of the last judgment as the real point of reference for the proclamation of justification, the less the other members of the commission were willing to follow him. They were rather captivated by the search for the mythical figure of the so-called modern man, applying Paul Tillich's mediating theology with its method of correlation to the description of justification, which finally found expression in the official documents of Helsinki and which became a kind of prototype of explicating and paraphrasing the content of the message of justification up through today. Modern man today does not ask for a gracious God in the last judgment, he is rather searching for meaning in his present life. Therefore the church does not answer man's question if she proclaims his rescue in the last judgment. Rather, she should

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[79]One may see Gottfried Martens, "Die Frage nach der Rettung aus dem Gericht. Der Beitrag Peter Brunners zur Behandlung der Rechtfertigungsthematik vor und bei der IV. Vollversammlung des Lutherischen Weltbundes in Helsinki 1963," *Lutherische Theologie and Kirche* 13 (1989): 41-71.

proclaim that man's life is meaningful because he is accepted by God just as he is. This sounds so reasonable yet is complete nonsense for several reasons. First, it is simply wrong that Martin Luther asked the question "How do I get a gracious God" and was finally relieved when he found an answer for this question in the Bible. Rather, Luther himself testifies that his reformational breakthrough took place when God made him realize that this question—What do I have to do in order to get a gracious God?—was wrong.[80] Thus, the message of justification was not the answer to man's question in the Reformation period either. Second, it is a theological catastrophe to replace the dialectic of law and gospel with the correlation scheme of human question and divine answer.[81] It is simply not the task of the church to answer human questions, but rather it is to proclaim the questions God asks of us. It is not man who is the judge deciding which topics should be touched upon, but it is God who puts the decisive questions on the agenda. He is acting both through law and gospel, and the last judgment does not take place only if people are interested in it. Using the correlation scheme of human question and divine answer, Christian proclamation is finally subject to the laws of a free enterprise economy, to the laws of supply and demand. On this basis, it is obvious that something nice must be said to the hearers so that they will like and accept it. The message of the last judgment certainly does not belong to this kind of proclamation. Finally, it is also substantially wrong to substitute the language of justification with the language of acceptance. Justification implies the death of the old man and the resurrection of the new man. Acceptance, however, suggests a continuity between the old and the new man, as if God simply turns a blind eye to sinful man. The same is true concerning the popular attempt to describe the message of justification as an answer to the various attempts of modern man to justify himself, telling him that he need not try to justify himself anymore, since he is justified by God. This is an adulteration of the message of justification, too. First, it is wrong to create the impression that God simply took over man's job of procuring justification. Man's search for justification is not only superfluous, but sin, as his search is turned in the wrong direction. Second, God's justification is no substitute for man's self-justification, because the forum of these two justifications is totally different. The forum of man's self-justification is his own

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[80]One may see Martens, "Glaubensgewißheit," 171 and following.

[81]One may see Gottfried Martens, "Helsinki Reconsidered," *Lutheran Forum* 24 (1990): 2:27-30.

conscience or his surrounding. The forum of God's justification, however, is not public opinion, but His final tribunal. Regarding justification simply as acceptance or as an equivalent to man's self-justification totally removes it from the biblical context; sin is reduced to an experience of human lack. It does not make sense anymore to speak of Christ's death on the cross as an atonement either. It is indeed striking to see how little is said about Christ's vicarious death both in the ecumenical documents on justification and in many modern sermons.

The experience of Helsinki has shown that the substance of what is meant by justification is lost as soon as the last judgment is given up as the decisive point of reference for the proclamation of justification by faith alone. That is, however, exactly, what has happened in the *Joint Declaration* and the *Annex*. Only the abandonment of the most important question enabled both sides to speak of a consensus in basic truths concerning the doctrine of justification. Here, too, the very starting point of this agreement must be firmly opposed.

3. God's justifying work is the center of Holy Scripture; therefore justification is the criterion for scriptural proclamation in the church.

The *Joint Declaration*'s long first chapter on the biblical message of justification, quoting many scriptural passages, is impressive.[82] Thus, it seems as if the authors of the *Joint Declaration* have taken the *sola scriptura* concern of the Reformation very seriously, founding the consensus on a common understanding of Holy Scripture. When one looks closer at this chapter, however, one is disappointed, because the way the Bible is treated here differs distinctly from the Reformation approach to Holy Scripture.

First of all, one will notice that in this section—following the method that was already applied in the American document *Justification by Faith* of 1983—many different scriptural passages are just placed side by side without considering context and without trying to weigh them and relate them to each other.[83] Scriptural quotations are given equal weight and create the impression that there is a great variety of concepts of justification in the Bible, in which each church can recognize her own

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[82]One may see JD §§ 8-12.
[83]One may see Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders,* 245-248.

concerns. Thus, Holy Scripture is not used at all as "the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged," as the Formula of Concord puts it.[84] Rather, the impression is created that it is the task of the churches and the theologians to arrange their specific theology from the quarry of Holy Scripture. Second, one notices in the *Joint Declaration* that certain basic terms like "justification," "sin," and "grace" are not precisely or even at all defined. Thus, certain equivocations are possible or perhaps even desired. Thus, Holy Scripture cannot exercise its critical function either, as long as these clarifications are avoided. Third, one notices that certain basic scriptural passages concerning justification are simply missing, for example Romans 5:6-11, where Christ is described as dying for the ungodly; Romans 4:17, where God's saving act is described as a new creation of those who were dead; or Philippians 3, where Saint Paul expressly excludes all of his own righteousness. That the gospel proclaims our salvation from God's wrath is not recognizable in the document at all.[85] Fourth, one notices that there is a certain interpretive way that these scriptural passages are quoted. The biblical wording is often left in favor of a certain understanding of these texts, keeping or tearing asunder God's acting and man's answer, introducing certain Roman Catholic presuppositions in the interpretation of these texts. Several exegetes have very convincingly demonstrated this by means of the text of the *Joint Declaration*; their analyses are revealing, helping to resist the thesis of Holy Scripture as a medley of different incoherent concepts of justification, used as the basis for the ecumenical method of describing a basic consensus with certain different concerns remaining.[86]

It is especially striking to see how the word of God, the gospel, and the message of justification are interpreted in the *Joint Declaration* in a certain Roman Catholic way as information about something, rather than something that has a performative and effective character. The message of justification merely "directs us in a special way towards the heart of

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[84]FC Epitome § 1, Tappert, 464.

[85]*SELK-Stellungnahme* § 1, 189.   .

[86]One may see Volker Stolle, "'Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre' mit fragwürdiger biblischer Begründung," *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* 23 (1999):190-202; one may see also Volker Stolle, "Rechtfertigung und Schriftauslegung. Zum Schriftgebrauch im Rechtfertigungskapitel der ökumenischen Studie 'Lehrverurteilungen kirchentrennend,'" *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* 14 (1990):1-18.

the New Testament witness to God's saving action in Christ."[87] That God's saving action actually takes place through this message of justification, however, is widely disregarded.

When the gospel as God's power to save those who believe is domesticated in such a way, it is obvious that the message of justification simultaneously loses its criteriological function. It is not by chance that the Roman Catholic side so vehemently opposed the Lutheran concern of justification as the criterion for the proclamation of the church. There are many areas in the life and the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church that are not compatible with this message of justification. One only needs to mention the whole problem of indulgences, which has again come to the fore because of the Holy Year in Rome; the problem of penance and satisfactions,[88] and not least the teaching of the Second Vatican Council concerning non-Christian religions. The statement of the Council that those "who, through no fault of their own, do not know the gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience — those too may achieve eternal salvation" can certainly be upheld only if the message of justification has no criteriological function and is rather just one truth among many others in the hierarchy of truths spoken of by the Second Vatican Council.[89]

The examples that have just been mentioned focus attention on the actual life and proclamation of the church. That is where the real decisions concerning justification are taken. Once more: Justification is not a concept or a theory, either in the New Testament or in the Lutheran Confessions. Therefore it does not develop, rather it takes place. This is the basic weakness of all the former ecumenical documents on justification and of the *Joint Declaration* as well. They claim to have succeeded in coming to a convergence or a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification. What this means, however, for the actual preaching in the church, for the pastoral care and counseling, for the way confession and Holy Absolution are administered, is not said. Is it equally legitimate to proclaim that a Christian may have assurance of salvation and to proclaim that he may not have it? Is it equally legitimate to proclaim that our good works make no difference in God's last judgment

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[87]JD § 17.
[88]One may see *SELK-Stellungnahme* § 1, 193.
[89]*Lumen Gentium* II,16.

and to proclaim that they are meritorious? Is it equally legitimate to proclaim that the Christian remains a real sinner as a justified person as well and to proclaim that he is only a potential sinner after baptism and only becomes a sinner when he voluntarily separates himself from God? Is it equally legitimate to invite Christians to Rome in order to receive indulgences for passing Holy Doors in certain churches and to proclaim that there is not a surplus treasure of good works of the saints that can be distributed by the church and that such a teaching fundamentally contradicts the proclamation of justification? Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger has frankly said that the decisions of the Council of Trent will in the future remain the measure of all things in his church. Are we willing to accept a proclamation which is based on these decisions as a true proclamation of the message of justification?

A little is gained, but much is lost, by actually subscribing to the *Joint Declaration* and the *Common Statement*. The illusion of a consensus is gained. Lost, however, is the clarity of the message of justification that we are obliged to preach on the basis of our Lutheran Confessions.

This rejection of the *Joint Declaration* presupposes, however, that we know what we have to preach, that we preach the message of our justification by faith alone in all its clarity and purity. Thus, we have to ask ourselves, are our sermons characterized by the clear distinction of law and gospel? Do we ourselves trust in the efficacy of God's word that we preach, or do we think that it is our task to impart faith to our hearers and that we have to do what is in fact the Holy Spirit's task? Can the hearers of our sermons be assured of their salvation, or do we call this assurance into question by placing conditions on the gospel? Do we ourselves realize that faith is a work of God and not a human answer to God's word and also not the human contribution to our salvation? Do we avoid moralizing on sin, as if sin were just certain deeds that are done by us voluntarily? Is the last judgment a decisive point of reference in our preaching? Do we preach justification as our rescue from and in this last judgment, or do we confine ourselves to preaching a light version of the gospel, speaking of acceptance and mere niceties? Are we aware of this last judgment in our pastoral work as well, or are we more afraid of certain human judgments on what we do and say? And how do we finally deal with the word of Holy Scripture? Are we open and willing to be judged by this word ourselves, do we expect to be called to repentance ourselves by this word and to be corrected and to be encouraged by it?

Or do we quietly think that we can judge the word of Holy Scripture? Do we think that it is our task to bring life to these old documents?

When we think about these questions, we will then realize once more what it means that we ourselves live on God's justifying grace alone, on his word of forgiveness, which takes away all our human failure. When we start to think anew about these decisive questions, then we can be grateful for the whole discussion that was initiated by the *Joint Declaration*. For then we are led back to the very center of our proclamation and of the life of our churches. We are led to the basic event in the whole church catholic that will continue to take place even though it might be veiled in certain ecumenical documents. May the *Joint Declaration* help us to this realization!

Successful or Justified?
The North American Doctrine of Salvation by Works[1]

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Introduction

The discussion about Lutheran identity in North America is not new. Since at least the American Lutheran controversy of the middle nineteenth century, North American Lutherans have been trying to decide how to communicate Lutheran doctrine and live a Lutheran way of life within a culture formed by an English Reformed approach to Christianity.[2] During the latter half of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth, this discussion was very much in the background as Lutheranism on this continent welcomed huge numbers of immigrants from Germany, then Scandinavia, and finally Eastern Europe after World War II. The question of survival eclipsed the question of assimilation. Since the 1950s, Lutherans have once again entered a period much more similar to the period from 1793 to 1840. Once again the majority of Lutherans in Anglophone North America are culturally and linguistically assimilated. The question about religious assimilation has again come to the fore and has already produced battles much like those of the American Lutheran controversy. As was true in the debate between Samuel Simon Schmucker and Charles Porterfield Krauth, the arguments today tend to revolve not around whether we should assimilate, but how we should assimilate.

[2]The classic study of this controversy, Vergilius Ferm, *The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology: A Study of the Issue between American Lutheranism and Old Lutheranism* (New York: Century, 1927), has been enhanced by Paul P. Kuenning, *The Rise and Fall of American Lutheran Pietism: The Rejection of an Activist Heritage* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988) and David A. Gustafson, *Lutherans in Crisis: The Question of Identity in the American Republic* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

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Successful or Justified?

One option that has been put forward is that Lutherans should assimilate to North America's Anglophone cultures by adopting the style of American Evangelicalism. In the words of David Luecke, we should maintain our Lutheran substance but adopt an Evangelical style.[3] The "Evangelical style, Lutheran substance" argument is that Lutherans need to adopt forms that are culturally relevant to North America. The argument begins from the point that matters of liturgy and polity — what Luecke calls "style" — are not matters of the confession of the gospel, but adiaphora. Only the issue of requiring certain adiaphora is an issue of the confession of the gospel. Luecke then argues that, given that issues of "style" are adiaphora, Lutherans are free to and ought to adopt a style that works to communicate the gospel to modern Americans. To know what works we need to look around at which churches are growing and which are declining. We then determine what the reasons for the growth and decline are, and we adopt those styles that do not compromise our basic theology — what Luecke calls "substance" — and that produce growth.

Luecke argues that we cannot use our traditions as an excuse for losing touch with people. We need to risk change from our immigrant past so that we can continue to communicate the gospel to contemporary people so that they can understand our message as gospel for them. Luecke also points out that many of the changes in North American Lutheranism since World War II have moved us in a more elitist and less populist direction. He advocates that we look at the Evangelicals and their appeal to a wider spectrum of Americans.

An opposing point of view is that Lutherans should assimilate themselves to North America by adopting a more Anglican or even Roman Catholic approach to being American or Canadian. Richard John Neuhaus, for example, believes that style and substance are intimately linked, that questions of style are questions of substance. For that reason he believes that the best future for Lutherans who really accept the Lutheran view of the gospel and the gospel's place in the world is within the Roman Catholic Church. In *The Catholic Moment* Neuhaus argues that the best way to be an evangelical Christian today is to be a Roman

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[3]David S. Luecke, *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance: Facing America's Mission Challenge* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988).

Catholic and that the best way to be an American today is to be a Roman Catholic.[4]

It would be possible to psychologize both Neuhaus's Americanism, including his antipathy to liberation theology, and his Roman Catholicism, but this would be a mistake. *The Catholic Moment* is a serious proposal for Christian identity in contemporary America. While Neuhaus's personal answer seems unlikely to attract many imitators—as one wag put it, "I'll kiss the Pope's ring when she's a Lutheran"—there is a significant number of clergy and seminary faculty in North American Lutheranism who are formally sympathetic. This movement refers to itself as "Evangelical Catholic." Evangelical Catholics believe that the ecumenical future of Lutheranism lies in rapprochement with Canterbury, Rome, and Constantinople, rather than Geneva. They believe that the catholic substance of the liturgy is essential to what it means to be a Lutheran. Beyond the serious theology that is done by Evangelical Catholics, there is increasing interest in adopting ancient or medieval liturgical practices among some clergy and, Roman Catholic styles of piety seem to have captured the agenda of those interested in "spirituality."

If we are to make thoughtful and theologically sound decisions about expressing Lutheranism in Canada or the United States, we need to understand the ideology that drives our two Anglophone cultures. We need to make an informed evaluation about how the religious forms of those cultures, with their roots in the English Reformation, relate to central affirmations of Lutheran theology and ethics. One way in which we can approach the ideological foundations of our cultures is to examine how they have understood what makes for a successful life. If we ask what we are taught about success, we might well discover some of the underlying theology of the whole culture, including its peculiar expressions of Christianity.

The literature of success shows us what we are taught to believe about salvation in North American culture. Over the years, we North Americans have come to merge success and salvation in our thinking. When most readers of success tracts were anticipating a heavenly home outside this world, the focus was more on serving God through successful living.

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[4]Richard John Neuhaus, *The Catholic Moment: The Paradox of the Church in the Postmodern World* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

Now, as fewer and fewer of us think of heaven as our current home or eventual destination, success is not the result of salvation, but salvation itself. Even for many Fundamentalist televangelists, being saved means being healthy and prosperous here and now. Thus, in our beliefs about success we can see the soteriology of North American culture in bold relief.[5]

The Literature of Success: Virtue and Character

Cotton Mather's tract *A Christian at His Calling*, from 1701, shows that religious leaders in New England were concerned to instruct people about how to be successful in this life as well as the next. Mather also shows how closely temporal success and eternal salvation were connected in the American mind.

> There are *Two Callings* to be minded by *All Christians*. Every Christian hath a GENERAL CALLING; which is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and Save his own Soul in the Services of *Religion*. . . . But then, every Christian hath also a PERSONAL CALLING; or a certain *Particular Employment*, by which his *Usefulness*, in his Neighborhood, is distinguished . . . . We are Beneficial to *Humane Society* by the Works of that Special OCCUPATION, in which we are to be employ'd, according to the Order of God.
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> A Christian at his *Two Callings* is a man in a Boat, Rowing for Heaven; the *House* which our Heavenly Father hath intended for us. If he mind but one of his *Callings*, be it which it will, he pulls the Oar

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[5]So far I have not been able to locate historical studies of the idea of success or success literature in Canada. For that reason this essay will focus on American material. Several studies, such as Louis B. Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1935) have shown that the success idea in England's Puritan and Enlightenment colonies is little different from that in the mother country, so we might assume that Canadian visions of success are similar to American. At least two examples of Canadian success tracts that I have come across, William E. Blatz, *The Habit of Success*, A 1929 Edith Butler Pool Lecture (Chicago: The Visiting Nurse Association of Chicago, 1930), and Jack H. McQuaig, *Challenge Yourself and Live* (Toronto: Hunter Carlyle Publishing, 1973), develop the same themes as their American counterparts of the same eras. This may be why Blatz, at the time associated with Saint George's School for Child Study in Toronto, was asked to lecture on success to visiting nurses in Chicago. A historical study of the idea of success in Canada would be valuable.

but on <u>one side</u> of the Boat, and will make but a poor dispatch to the Shoar of Eternal Blessedness.[6]

If Mather is the godfather of success literature, the secular parent of all American writers on how to get ahead in business and life is Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was born and raised in Boston, but his thinking differs from the Calvinism of the New England Puritans at a significant point. The original Puritans saw a connection between God's grace and prosperity. Later Puritans such as Mather began to use words loosely and speak of people being responsible to save their own souls, but originally prosperity was a sign of election. Since election was not something that could be earned, living a successful life was a response of the elect person to God's gracious providence. Franklin, on the other hand, like the Enlightenment generally, embraced an Arminian view of providence. Franklin really did believe that prosperity was a function of the exercise of free will, not of election. Success was earned, not given, and virtuous success in this life was sure to be rewarded in the next.

Franklin's essays, "Advice to a Young Tradesman" and "The Way to Wealth," along with *Poor Richard's Almanack*, set the patterns that the genre of success literature followed for at least 150 years and that still influence self-help authors even in an age when they contradict most of Franklin's advice. He was the master of the aphorism — "Time is money"; "The sleeping Fox catches no Poultry"; "A Small Leak will Sink a great Ship" — and the philosophy that he expressed caused Max Weber to make Franklin the centerpiece of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, though Franklin's own version of the religion of his Boston forebears was, at best, Deism.[7]

The son of a candlemaker, out of school at ten to help in the family business, on his own and penniless at seventeen, rich enough to retire from business at forty-two, Franklin is everyone's favorite self-made man. In many ways he is the prototypical American. He was an inventor, a philanthropist, a public servant. He believed that by industry, frugality, and closely watching one's development in virtue, any young man could emulate his success in life.

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[6]Excerpted in Moses Rischin, editor, *The American Gospel of Success: Individualism and Beyond* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965), 23-24.

[7]Translated by Talcott Parsons, with a foreword by R. H. Tawney (New York: Scribner, 1930).

In this Franklin was no different from most other Americans in the decades following independence from Britain. Americans believed that they had not only created a new society, a new promised land, but that they had also provided the context for a new humanity — the self-made man. By the 1840s Franklin became the chief saint in the cult, the prime exemplar for those who strove to fulfill the promise of the new land. Not far behind came the earliest of the nineteenth century's millionaires, men like John Jacob Astor and Cornelius Vanderbilt who rose seemingly by nothing but their own efforts from obscurity to unbelievable wealth — Astor arrived in New York in 1780 with seven flutes and twenty-five dollars; Vanderbilt was the son of a Staten Island boatman and farmer.[8] Here was success writ large. Not every American before the Civil War believed that such wealth was within range, but most believed that virtue and hard work would bring at least comfortable prosperity.

If we can trust the self-help literature they read, Americans in most of the nineteenth century agreed with Mather and Franklin that success was a matter of character. If anything, low origins and lack of education were a help, for they forced the development of character and the habit of industry. Americans believed that character was developed though strenuous effort. Natural endowments did not matter, nor did an adverse origin. The successful were those who developed a character that featured the virtues of frugality, loyalty, industry, humility, and so on and so on. These virtues would be rewarded with success.

Among the most active success and self-help writers in the nineteenth century were Protestant ministers, especially Congregationalists, with Unitarians and Methodists, some Presbyterians and Baptists, and a few Episcopalians. Two prime examples were William Makepeace Thayer, a Congregationalist, and Russell Herman Conwell, a Baptist. Thayer wrote primarily biographies of successful people for children and young adults. His theory of success is summed up in *Turning Points in Successful Careers*: "The favorable opportunity presents itself, . . . and the observant and aspiring behold and seize it, and move on to fortune; while the indifferent and shiftless let it slip, and thereby invite failure."[9] Part of beholding the

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[8]For studies of Franklin, Astor, Vanderbilt and others, see Peter Baida, *Poor Richard's Legacy: American Business Values from Benjamin Franklin to Donald Trump* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1990).

[9]Quoted in Richard M. Huber, *The American Idea of Success* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 52.

favorable opportunity is having developed the virtuous character that makes one observant and aspiring. Thayer also produced text books for schools which promoted virtues such as self-reliance and perseverance and discouraged vices such as chewing tobacco and drinking. In all of his books, Thayer also promoted a pragmatic view of religion: Religion makes for success. In fact, said Thayer, religion demands success.[10]

Russell Conwell was probably the most successful clerical success writer of them all. His world-famous lecture "Acres of Diamonds" told the story of Al Hafed, a prosperous farmer in ancient Persia who began to think himself poor because he had no diamonds. As a result he sold his farm and set out to search for diamonds. In the end, destitute and diamondless after years of searching across Asia and Europe, he committed suicide in the sea at Gibralter. Meanwhile, the man who bought his farm discovered right there the fabulous diamond mines of Golconda and became the richest man in Persia. Conwell then interpreted the story to make sure no one missed the point: Any and everyone listening to him that very night in (here he inserted the city or town in which he was lecturing) could become richer than they were. The opportunity was there for the good citizens of wherever to "get rich quickly and honestly."[11] None could accuse Conwell of not practicing what he preached. He delivered "Acres of Diamonds" over six thousand times, which earned him several millions of dollars.[12]

Catholic priests and Lutheran pastors wrote no, or almost no, books on success in North America. Why? Irvin Wyllie speculates that Luther's strictures against usury and social mobility influenced the Lutherans. He also states that Catholics formed at best seven percent of the business leaders of the United States in the post-Civil War period, in large part because most Catholics were first generation immigrants at that time.[13] I believe that Wyllie is mistaken about Luther's influence on Lutherans. Between 1860 and 1900 what was true of Catholics was also true of Lutherans—most were first or second generation immigrants and, as such, suffered from the anti-immigrant sentiments of the time. The guides

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[10]Huber, *American Idea*, 54-55.

[11]Huber, *American Idea*, 59.

[12]Conwell is discussed in Huber, *American Idea*, 55-61, and Baida, *Poor Richard*, 239-240.

[13]Irvin G. Wyllie, *The Self-Made Man in America: The Myth of Rags to Riches* (New York: The Free Press, 1954), 56-57, 183.

to success of the era, and even down into the 1920s, were written not only by, but for the English Protestant native-born and show more than a little prejudice against immigrants. For example, Richard Weiss quotes success writer Bolton Hall who had no qualms about calling immigrants "the Dagos and Huns and Kikes."[14] Many others saw immigrants as one of the biggest threats to traditional definitions of and opportunities for success. The images of success presented to Americans in the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century were white, English Protestant, middle class, and nativist.

Now, when we think of the stereotypical self-help writer of the nineteenth century, we usually think of Horatio Alger Jr., son of a New England Unitarian minister and graduate of Harvard Divinity School.[15] He actually did not write straight "how to be a success" tracts. Rather, he wrote novels for young people and a few biographies of "log cabin to White House" presidents such as Lincoln and Garfield. It is the novels, which told the stories of boys who had risen from poverty to middle-class respectability, for which Alger is known. The plots of many of his novels follow the same pattern: A boy is for some reason beyond his own control at the bottom of the social ladder. Perhaps he hawks newspapers, perhaps he shines shoes. He is in an environment that makes virtue difficult, even next to impossible. But this boy is different than others—he is virtuous, industrious, and well mannered. At some point in the story a bit of luck comes his way. His character is noticed and a prosperous merchant takes him under his wing. From there the boy rises into the middle-class and is now both virtuous and moderately well off.

What is historically interesting about Alger and his novels is that when he wrote them, the world that he described was almost gone and when the books became particularly popular—after Alger's death, between 1900 and World War I—was completely gone. By that time the small-town merchant and yeoman farmer were fading fast and most people lived in cities and worked for ever larger companies. Alger's novels were more nostalgia for the success offered by an earlier America than they were

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[14]Richard Weiss, *The American Myth of Success: From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 132, citing Bolton Hall, *Thrift* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1916), 6-7.

[15]On Alter, see Huber, *American Idea*, 43-50; Weiss, *American Myth*, 48-63; and Rex Burns, *Success in America: The Yeoman Dream and the Industrial Revolution* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), 176-180.

examples of how one could get ahead in the present. But Alger still stands in the line that extends back to Benjamin Franklin. During the latter years of his life a new kind of success literature arose. In the new self-help books of the last decade of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century success was presented not as the product of a virtuous character, but as the product of a disciplined mind or a winning personality.

The Literature of Success: Mind and Personality

Richard Huber distinguishes three types of American success literature, that based on a character ethic, that based on a mind-power ethic, and that based on a personality ethic.[16] While the former was dominant from Mather and Franklin to the beginning of the twentieth century, the latter two began to come to the fore toward the end of the nineteenth century and have dominated the self-help books written since the 1920s. This is not to say that the older model quickly or completely disappeared. For example, Russell Conwell continued to deliver "Acres of Diamonds" to appreciative audiences into the 1920s, and the lecture was published in book form in 1915.[17] Alger's novels sold well into the first decades of the twentieth century. The ideal of hard work has remained very much alive in the United States right up to the present. The mind-power school shifted to the work necessary to shape one's thoughts for success through positive thinking and the personality school focused on the work of winning friends and influencing people, but both continue to believe that self-reliant work is at the heart of success.

The roots of the mind-power ethic are similar to the roots of interest in psychology in the United States, the mind-cure movement that began in New England in the middle nineteenth century and spread from there. The point of mind-cure was to use the patient's thoughts and beliefs to cure sickness in an age when medical doctors were often unable to affect the course of disease or infection.[18] The earliest popularizer of such mind-power seems to be Phineas Quimby, a New Englander born in the first decade of the nineteenth century.[19] He believed that disease is the result

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[16]Huber, *American Idea*, 502, note 1.
[17]Huber, *American Idea*, 471, note 23.
[18]Weiss, *American Myth*, 195-196.
[19]On Quimby, see Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers: Religion as Pop Psychology from Mary Baker Eddy to Oral Roberts*, reissue (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 33-38;

of mistaken beliefs or ideas and can be cured by mind-power. Quimby's mental healing disciples divided into two camps. The more disciplined group was led by Mary Baker Eddy and organized Christian Science; the rest were always much looser in organization and are generally called New Thought. While the ideas of New Thought sound familiar to any student of the variety of Gnostic and Neo-Platonic philosophies of the ancient world, the slant given to the mix is peculiarly American, adding Emerson and James to Plato and Hegel, and then basing the appeal on "proven" results.

New Thought was appealing to the Protestant middle classes of New England and certain western cities, especially to women and to those for whom more traditional forms of American Protestantism were beginning to lose their appeal. Within New Thought groups the idea that disease as a product of false beliefs soon evolved to encompass any setback in life as a product of false beliefs. By the 1880s New Thought success literature began to appear in profusion. Just as mind-cure attempted to use the mind to cure patients who seem immune to the treatments of physicians, so mind-power success literature served as both therapy and inspiration for a generation of Americans moving out of the age of the self-made entrepreneur and into the age of corporate middle management. The same unspoken concern for giving people the resources to cope with forces beyond their control appears in both the therapeutic and the success literature of New Thought.[20]

New Thought was related to the Transcendentalist philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson, himself the author of several success tracts and one of America's most popular lyceum lecturers. In Emerson's opinion, true success was not a chase after luck, but self-reliance and an "embracing of the affirmative." The purpose of life is to "make life and nature happier to us."[21] Emerson believed that such success ought to be pursued, for the improvement of individuals would lead to the reform of society. Self-culture was more important than political action. Self-reliance was the way of life that enabled a person to live in tune with the Oversoul, the

Huber, *American Idea*, 128-129; and Weiss, *American Myth*, 196-199.

[20]Weiss, *American Myth*, 195-196.

[21]John O. Cawelti, *Apostles of the Self-Made Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 92, citing Edward W. Emerson, editor, *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), volume VII, 308.

"universal spirit immanent in all things."[22] The ideal of such self reliance was the self-made man, vigorous, confident, enterprising. Both discipline of the body and cultivation of the soul were part of what Emerson believed went into being self-made. Thus Emerson combined the sense of virtue that was typical of the success literature of his own time and also anticipated the mind-power success writers of New Thought.

While the New Thoughters saw themselves as the antithesis of the Puritans that had gone before them, there were parallels. For New Thought divinity and redemption reside in the person, not outside the person in God, and the person controls his or her own destiny. Yet the connection between divinity and prosperity remains; transcendence and worldly success are part of a whole. For both Puritan and New Thoughter, success shows whom God favors. Whereas the Puritan believed that divine providence and election had some role in who became prosperous, New Thought agreed with Deists such as Franklin that God favors those who do what is required.[23]

What changes in the transition from character-ethic success literature to mind-power success literature are the requirements. The focus shifts from virtuous action in the world to powerful thoughts in the mind. No longer does the practice of virtues such as industry and thrift play the major role. What makes for success in the opinion of New Thoughters is mental self-mastery and power.[24] According to New Thought advisers, the person who wants to be successful cannot become possessed with the idea that conditions prevent or even impede success. Successful people are people who believe that they will succeed, not the thrifty or industrious.[25]

Success literature under the influence of New Thought completes the confusion of success and eternal salvation. The Reign of God is equated with success in a world from which pessimism has been eliminated. Human society is inevitably evolving into a world where death gives way to incorruptible life. The way to help bring this about was to be cheerful and expectant. The deadliest sin for New Thought was pessimism.[26] This

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[22]Cawelti, *Apostles*, 86.

[23]Weiss, *American Myth*, 149.

[24]Weiss, *American Myth*, 195-196.

[25]Weiss, *American Myth*, 132-133.

[26]Weiss, *American Myth*, 158, citing Orison Swett Marden—a mid-life convert and

eschatology was related to New Thought's equally optimistic view of human nature. All problems would ultimately be solved because evolution had brought human nature to the point where salvation was already determined.

New Thought's view of original sin was connected to this view of human nature and human destiny. In the view of the older New England theology, original sin was pride, attempting to make oneself like God. Mind-power turned this on its head — the original sin was humility, not taking one's own divinity seriously. Humility and self-depreciation were not natural, but had been bred into people by centuries of wrong thinking. What was necessary was a total rebuilding of the self-image so that ideas of sin and sickness — which had no reality of themselves, but were only constructs of wrong thinking or ignorance — could be rooted out.[27] The point was to stop thinking like a servant of God and start thinking like the god that you are. This doctrine shows most clearly how New Thought's shift from a success literature of virtuous character to a success literature of positive thinking was part of the shift that began around the turn of the century from a culture that valued thrift and industry to today's North American culture that values consumption and leisure.

All this happened during the period when the economy of the United States shifted from the individually-operated companies and partnerships of the early and middle nineteenth century to the huge corporations that still dominate our economic life. Readers of success literature at the turn of the century were people who were moving into what is now called middle management. New Thought encouraged people to be gods in their own minds at precisely the moment when independence became almost

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then one of the most prolific disciples of New Thought — and Elizabeth Towne. Marden might also be cited as the originator of a "church of joy" version of Christianity: "Melancholy, solemnity, used to be regarded as a sign of spirituality, but it is now looked upon as the imprint of a morbid mind. There is no religion in it. True religion is full of hope, sunshine, optimism, and cheerfulness. It is joyous and glad and beautiful. There is no Christianity in the ugly, the discordant, the sad . . . . 'Laugh until I come back' was a noted clergyman's 'good-by' salutation. It is a good one for us all." Marden, *Peace, Power and Plenty* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1909), 299-300, cited in Weiss, *American Myth*, 158.

[27]Weiss, *American Myth*, 164-165, citing James Allen, *The Path of Prosperity* (New York: R. F. Fenno, 1907), 61-62.

impossible in the external world of work. In this way, though sharply critical of the virtues of the nineteenth century, New Thought success literature was instrumental in keeping alive the illusions of the earlier centuries for a new age. New Thought enabled Americans to continue to believe that the United States was a land of unlimited opportunity and that anyone who had the proper frame of mind could succeed.

At one crucial point New Thought agreed completely with Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin: We are each responsible for achieving our own success in the world.[28] By 1900 this belief was becoming harder to maintain, so New Thought moved from virtue in the external world to virtue in the mental world. For mind power success literature the sins were fear, especially, and other "such mentally debilitating moods as apprehension, timidity, cowardice, depression, superstition, self-depreciation, doubting and worry." As Weiss states, in New Thought, "The faults of character were thus extended to include unpleasant states of mind. Conversely, happiness held first place on the . . . list of virtues."[29] We each remain responsible to do our best for our own salvation, but now doing our best means holding the proper frame of mind rather than exhibiting the proper behavior.

After something of a drought during the depth of the Depression of the 1930s—how does one maintain positive thoughts in a breadline?—New Thought enjoyed a revival in the 1950s. The post-Depression, post-War form of New Thought is expressed by one of the two central success writers of the twentieth century, Norman Vincent Peale. While there were "secular" mind-power success writers in this era, none were as well known nor struck such a responsive chord as Peale's connection of mind-power to mainline Protestant "faith." The title of Peale's most famous book sums up the theme of the mind-power approach to success: *The Power of Positive Thinking*.[30] This book ranked number five on the non-fiction lists in 1952, number one in 1953 and 1954, and number two in 1955. In 1956, it moved past Lloyd Douglas' *The Robe*, to become the bestseller in both fiction and non-fiction. No wonder that an advertisement from Prentice-Hall in that year called it "the best-loved

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[28]One may also see Cawelti, *Apostles*, 168.

[29]Weiss, *American Myth*, 165. Citation on mentally debilitating moods from John Herman Randall, "The Conquest of Fear and Worry," *A New Philosophy of Life* (New York: Dodge, 1911), 24.

[30](New York: Prentice-Hall, 1952).

inspirational book of our time."[31] Here is a book on how to live a successful life for Ozzie Nelson and Ward Cleaver.

What was the message that took the new suburbs by storm? Peale believed that there was no problem that could not be overcome by faith, positive thinking — and Peale was never too clear about whether there was any distinction between the two — and prayer. He offered techniques for successful living, the purpose of which is to clear away disease and failure-producing thoughts and replace them with creative and healthy thoughts. These techniques would enable his readers to control the circumstances around them, improve their relationships, and gain esteem. If they would but master the principles of positive thinking they could live a happier, more successful life. Whether you were an unhappy failure or a happy success was dependent on your thoughts.[32] The basic creed is Believe and Succeed. The principles include prayer based on the New Thought "laws" of attraction, affirmation, and Divine supply and using the law of visualization to hold a mental picture of yourself succeeding.

Clearly, positive thinking is the New Thought of the 1880s–1920s expressed in the forms of 1950s homiletics. Peale appeals to the classic New Thought "laws" of attraction (positive thoughts attract positive results, negative thoughts attract negative results), visualization (if you picture yourself succeeding, you will succeed), and Divine Supply (God wants to make you healthy and wealthy, so demand success and health from God) that had been put forth since the beginning. But Peale is more than just one more follower of Phineas Quimby. *The Power of Positive Thinking* was the finest hour for New Thought and the mind-power ethic in general. With his ability to take the often obtuse metaphysics of New Thought and express them in the native American language of technique and practicality, and then combine them with the general 1950s faith in faith, Peale made New Thought — though he probably never, ever admitted the real source of positive thinking — more popular than its original apostles had accomplished. Perhaps the most fitting symbol of Peale's version of success and its cultural importance was that it was he who was selected to preside over the marriage of David Eisenhower and Julie Nixon.

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[31]Huber, *American Idea*, 316-317, citing Alice Payne Hackett, *60 Years of Best Sellers, 1895-1955* (New York, 1956) and *New York Times Book Review*, April 8, 1956 and October 11, 1959.

[32]Huber, *American Idea*, 317, 325.

The second line of success literature that developed out of the changes that industrialism brought at the end of the nineteenth century was that based on what Huber calls a "personality ethic." In this case it is not the person's virtuous character or mind power—though mind-power advice and personality advice could be, and often were, mixed—but a "winning" personality that guaranteed success. Unlike the mind-power ethic, the personality ethic was not so much a rebellion against as an evolution from the character ethic under the conditions of mass-production, and the related need for mass sales. The virtue of "industry" evolved into the personality characteristic of "pep" or "vim" as the economy came to depend more and more on mass sales of products mass produced by machines in the factory system. When the Depression of the 1930s revealed that "failure to consume" could lead to economic catastrophe, the death notice was delivered to the virtue of frugality. The growing popularity of psychology and psychoanalysis after the turn of the century was also influential. While the central figure of this line of thought was Dale Carnegie (the second of the twentieth century's central success writers), he was the culmination of an evolution toward personality as the key to success.

One early example of this evolution from character to personality is Bruce Barton. The son of an influential Congregational minister, Barton was one of the founding partners of the B. B. D. & O. advertising agency and wrote a number of success tracts. None of Barton's writings became so well known as his presentation of Jesus as the best salesman in history. *The Man Nobody Knows* was number four on the best-seller list for 1925 and became the run-away nonfiction best seller of 1926.[33] According to Barton, Jesus is the most popular dinner guest in Jerusalem, a muscular hero whose parables showed a genius for advertising. Jesus was able to gain the crowds' attention because he advertised himself by service. In Barton's view, to use one of his chapter titles, Jesus was "The Founder of Modern Business."[34] It is hard to believe that Barton's super salesman was the same Jesus executed by the Romans for sedition and blasphemy.

The efficiency approach to success was also part of the evolution. Beginning in the 1880s, under the influence of the nineteenth-century infatuation with science and the increasing mechanization of the work

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[33](Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1925); Huber, *American Idea*, 209.
[34]Huber, *American Idea*, 196-209.

place, Frederick W. Taylor had developed "scientific management" with the goal of forcing human workers to be as "efficient" as their machines. By the 1910s and 20s success writers were incorporating scientific management's ideal of machine-like efficiency into advice on how to succeed. One of the pioneers was Edward Earle Puriton, director of the Independent Efficiency Service and Dean of the American Efficiency Foundation. Perhaps the father of modern "time management," Puriton believed that "not genius, nor influence, nor affluence, but a scientific work schedule, makes the great man or the great business."[35] The one who could efficiently manage his time through organization and standardization would be a success. This branch of success writing contributed two elements to the evolution of the character ethic. The first was an emphasis on technique, which also influenced the power of positive thinking. Puriton and others claimed that simply by applying their efficiency techniques faithfully you could make a success of yourself. The second was an increase in the pragmatic appeal. The characteristics that were encouraged were not so much good in and of themselves, but were good insofar as they contributed to success. For many nineteenth century success writers liquor, for example, was to be avoided because it was in itself evil. For Frederick Taylor liquor was to be avoided because it was inefficient. In the 1920s the argument was not that industry was a virtue to be practiced for its own sake, but that pep and efficiency produced sales.

The Depression brought the personality ethic's approach into full flower. From 1929 until World War II, neither character nor mind-power could do much for the thousands of unemployed. When success writers committed to these approaches supported Hoover's idea that cutting government spending and reducing the deficit were the best ways to deal with economic crisis and recreate the conditions of limitless opportunity—or, in the case of mind-power, advised the unemployed simply to think the Depression away—both lost adherents by the droves.

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[35]Huber, *American Idea*, 220, citing E. E. Puriton, *Puriton Practical Course in Personal Efficiency* (New York, 1919). Academics might be interested that Puriton also seems to be a pioneer in the production model of higher education. He proposed that any university sixty-percent of whose graduates were not fully employed within the first year after graduation be cut off from all public support until the curriculum is changed to produce employed graduates. This proposal is symptomatic of the shift that occurred in nineteenth-century America away from the classics-oriented curriculum to the more pragmatic modern curriculum.

What is especially interesting is the number of Americans who, even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, wanted to go on believing that an almost infinite space for personal success still existed and that they could, through the exercise of free will, attain success. Such people adopted the personality ethic as the means to success.

The most famous, and probably the determinative, statement of the personality ethic was written in 1936 by sometime teacher of public speaking Dale Carnegie: *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, possibly the most influential self-help manual ever written.[36] The popularity of this approach to success is indicated in the sales record of Carnegie's book—by 1970 it had sold approximately eight million copies in English, plus translations had been made into over thirty languages.[37] How does Dale Carnegie believe people become successful? The title of the book sums up his advice: We become successful when we develop the sort of personality that enables us to win friends and influence the people around us. Hard work is still part of the package, and there is a bit of mind-power involved, but the focus is not on virtue or thought per se. The work and thinking necessary is that which enables us to present ourselves so that people will like us and do what we want them to do. Success in the personality ethic means making advertizing a philosophy of life.

In Carnegie's view, the problem that must be overcome to be successful is other people. Unlike previous ages, when one could work hard without much concern for relational ability, the modern age is one in which almost all work is accomplished through people. The person who wants to be successful will either have to supervise people or sell things to people, and everyone must work under supervision and is dependent on the supervisor's assessment in order to advance. Thus success depends on your ability to deal with people. The more popular and self-confident you are, not the more virtuous, the more successful you become and the more money you earn.

Behind Carnegie's view of success and how to achieve it is an anthropology based in late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century psychology. Human beings are not logical, but emotional. They are filled with needs and cravings. The most important of these—and here

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[36](New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936).
[37]Huber, *American Idea*, 231, citing figures supplied by Simon and Schuster.

Carnegie makes reference specifically to Freud and John Dewey — is the need to be important. This makes people maneuverable. We can make people want to do what we want them to do if we know how to make them feel important. Being a success in life is like being a success in fishing. We must bait the hook with just the right bait that will make the fish want to bite, even if it means using a bait that is not very appetizing to us.[38] The point of *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is to teach Carnegie's students how to bait the hook. The book is filled with a variety of six-ways-to-this and ten-ways-to-that; Carnegie is very much the child of the evolution toward presenting the way to success as technique. His "Six Ways to Make People Like You" shows the heart of the way to success.

Rule 1:　Become genuinely interested in other people.

Rule 2:　Smile.

Rule 3:　Remember that a man's name is to him the sweetest and most important sound in the English language.

Rule 4:　Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.

Rule 5:　Talk in terms of the other man's interests.

Rule 6:　Make the other person feel important — and do it sincerely.[39]

While the Dale Carnegie approach may seem just to be a course in how to be a door-to-door salesman, Carnegie himself did not see it in this light. He believed that he was presenting Depression and post-Depression Americans a new way of life that could bring success and advancement under the new conditions present in modern corporate life. In this he was not alone, and the phenomenal sales of his own books were only part of the story. Apostles of the personality ethic sprang up across America. Elmer "Don't Sell the Steak — Sell the Sizzle" Wheeler and Frank "How I Raised My self from Failure to Success in Selling" Bettger were just two of the best-selling authors and popular lecturers that came to the fore to tell people how anyone could be a success just like they were. Publisher Prentice-Hall made a commitment to books presenting the personality

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[38]Huber, *American Idea*, 238-239.

[39]Huber, *American Idea*, 239-241, citing Carnegie, *How to Win Friends*, various chapters.

ethic and passed Thomas J. Crowell, preeminent publisher of books based on mind power, as the major self-help book producer in North America.[40]

What Carnegie never addressed is the seemingly insoluble problem that if winning friends and influencing people is based on the six ways (and the ten this and twelve that), then genuine interest in other people becomes just a technique and is never really genuine. While the techniques of the personality ethic demanded sincerity, their nature as techniques precluded exactly what they required. Perhaps here we can see clearly the shift from relationships as relational to relationships as instrumental that so plagues modern society. Even sincerity becomes something that can be turned on depending on desired results. Carnegie's man on the make even has to become technical about choosing the proper wife who can contribute to his success.

One of those who showed the possibilities of combining the mind-power and personality ethics is W. Clement Stone, the founder of the Combined Insurance Company and developer of "Positive Mental Attitude," put forward in *The Success System That Never Fails.*[41] Stone was very much a product of both the ideas that success means following a step-by-step technique and that selling is a way of life. As late as 1987, Combined Insurance was requiring its agents to use the techniques of Positive Mental Attitude and sales pitches designed by Stone.[42] Positive Mental Attitude was based on Emile Coué's "Power of Conscious Autosuggestion." Stone's company cheer of "I feel healthy, I feel happy, I feel terrific," was the equivalent of Coué's "Day by day in every way I am getting better and better" mantra. Stone also instructed employees, "Direct your thoughts . . . Control your emotions . . . Ordain your destiny." People are not to be held back by timidity and fear, but are to keep on working toward their goals. If properly self-conditioned, one can suppress negative thinking fully. The successful person believes that any task faced can be and will be done. Even "I think I can, I think I can" is

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[40]Huber, *American Idea*, 253-259.

[41](Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1962).

[42]Robin Leidner, *Fast Food, Fast Talk: Service Work and the Routinization of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) is a study of the work routines used by McDonald's and Combined Insurance and their impact on workers in those companies. As Leidner points out, Combined, through teaching Stone's philosophy of success, attempts to control work routines by controlling employees' beliefs in the same way that other companies control employees by determining processes.

not enough. We must say, "I can and I will." In this it is easy to see the influence of the mind-power ethic on Stone and Positive Mental Attitude, but he also includes the personality ethic. Other slogans such as, "To be happy, make others happy," and "I dare you to develop a winning personality" go along with instruction on sales techniques that could have been copied out of any Dale Carnegie book. At Combined Insurance agents were trained to talk to potential customers about the customer's interests as a means to close a sale.[43]

Conclusion

This history would seem to support Charles Taylor's conviction that we have undergone a debasing of the core value of authenticity in North American culture.[44] What began as a means by which the average person could express worship to God in daily life has become a system of techniques for selling oneself. The successful Ben Franklin, for whom the whole point of acquiring wealth was to retire from business in middle age and devote one's life to community service, has become the hot-slot stockbroker who looks out for Number One. Authenticity, whether defined in Cotton Mather's Puritan terms or Franklin's Enlightenment terms, as the means for success has become selfishness as the means to success. In the process, the definition of what makes up a good life has changed significantly. Authors of tracts or novels showing people how to be successful have not so much been the cause of these changes, as they have reflected them and shown how our culture has tried throughout the last several hundred years to maintain a consistent set of beliefs about the world and how we make our way in it.

This history also supports one of the insights of Robert Bellah and his co-workers that today North Americans tend to understand more about the means to success than the content of a successful life.[45] The success tracts of the character ethic were quite clear that the means to success were intimately related to the content of success. Virtue was its own reward in more ways than one. The earlier mind-power writers also saw a distinction between the goal, health and prosperity, and the means,

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[43]Leidner, *Fast*, 86-124.

[44]Expressed in, for example, Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, The 1991 CBC Massey Lectures, (Concord, Ontario: House of Anansi, 1991).

[45]Robert N. Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 21.

thought. Since the advent of the personality ethic, though, the emphasis in success literature has come to focus more and more on means alone. Looking at this shift in advice on living a successful life, the problem identified by the authors of *Habits of the Heart* may not reside in the roots of our tradition of moral discourse, but in the evolution of that tradition under the influence of the modern infatuation with technology and technique—with what Taylor sees as the malaise related to the role of instrumental reason and its application in technology.

For Lutherans, though, the problem resides at a different level. We are no doubt sad to see the debasement of the value of authenticity, but even the way that people were taught to achieve authenticity at the height of the character/virtue ethic is problematic for us theologically. We do not believe that a person obtains what is important in life through achievement of any sort. We do not believe that hard work, character, positive thinking, or a winning personality will gain us anything important. Rather, we believe the opposite. With Augustine and Luther, we believe that it is just when we are at our hardworking, positive-thinking, people-influencing best that we are at our arrogant worst and farthest from God. The Lutheran Confessions teach that justification, that meaning in life, that our place in God's economy is a gift, given to us unconditionally in the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. To hold that a person's worth is determined by hard work or a virtuous character or positive thinking or a winning personality that results in success contradicts the very center of confessional Lutheran theology. To hold that people are justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone contradicts the American doctrine of success.

So there is our quandary. How can we assimilate to a culture that contradicts the very core of who we are as a theological movement? Given that the American view of success is just as Episcopalian—and not very far removed from the Medieval *facere quod in se est*—as it is Puritan or Methodist, is the choice between "Evangelical Style" and "Evangelical Catholic" really a choice at all? Should we perhaps put a hold on debating how to assimilate and go back to debating whether to assimilate? These are questions that Lutherans need to address openly and in community with one another. If what has been reported above accurately reflects the religion of North America, then it is possible that any assimilation to any form of North American Christianity will involve softening our commitment to the core Lutheran doctrine of justification in favor of a

doctrine that allows a place for free choice and moral living in deciding a person's favor before God.

And yet, most of us are native-born North Americans whose primary personal and theological language is English. We are no longer really Germans or Swedes or Norwegians. We live and move and have our being in Christ as Americans and Canadians — mostly white and middle class. We cannot simply walk away from our own culture or live as if it were something other than what it is. Are we trapped on the treadmill of theological assimilation, or is there a way forward toward a unique North American way of being Lutheran that is both different from European ways of being Lutheran and also founded on our unique understanding of the gospel of God's grace communicated by the Holy Spirit through word and sacrament?

The Lutheran Confessions: Luther's Role

Eugene F. A. Klug

Martin Luther has been described as a living confession himself. It is impossible to treat the documents known as the Lutheran Confessions apart from the role the miner's son (Hans Luther's) played in their origin. His massive figure dominates in their creation, as it does in the Reformation itself.

The thought never came to nest in Luther's mind or heart that the doctrine for which he stood was uniquely his own. It belonged to God and, therefore, "must be straight as a plumb line, sure, and without sin."[1] In a sermon on John 7: 9-16 (July 1, 1531) he stated: "It is not my doctrine, not my creation, but God's gift. Dear Lord God, it was not spun out of my head, nor grown in my garden. Nor did it flow out of my spring, nor was it born of me. It is God's gift, not a human discovery."[2]

Confession of God-given doctrine has characterized the church bearing Luther's name ever since the day he testified heroically before Charles V and the church's prelates at the Diet of Worms. The Lutheran Church has often been criticized, unfairly I believe, by those who emphasize "undogmatic Christianity," deeds instead of creeds. But the church cannot deny its history, nor its creed-bound nature, to speak assertively for God's doctrine, most often with thesis and antithesis. It does so out of love and respect for God's saving gospel through Christ's redeeming work.

Lutheran Churches (synods) in America commonly include a plank in their constitutions tying them to the Lutheran Symbols embraced within the Book of Concord. Some, like The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, commit themselves to the Confessions with unqualified subscription. Others consider some of these Confessions to have historical import, but

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[1]*Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 volumes, edited by J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-1986), 41:217. Subsequent references to this work will be abbreviated as *LW*.

[2]*Dr. Martin Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften*, edited by Johnnes Georg Walch (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1880-1910), volume 8, column 27.

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they are not primary and binding in the same way as the Augsburg Confession. Nine symbols constitute the Book of Concord and define the Lutheran Church and its theology: the three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles', Nicene, Athanasian); the unaltered Augsburg Confession; the Apology of the Augsburg Confession; the Smalcald Articles (and Tractate); the Large and Small Catechisms of Luther; and the Formula of Concord. Lutheran churches elsewhere in the world present a similar picture, either strictly confessional or qualifiedly so. Some of them bind themselves to the Book of Concord as an accurate, scriptural exposition of the Christian faith; others see it as a valuable historical document in expression of their faith only.

All nine documents have a connection—some more, some less—with the mind and spirit of Luther. Thomas Carlyle characterized Luther as "great, not as a hewn obelisk, but as an Alpine mountain, so simple, honest, spontaneous, not setting up to be great at all; there for another purpose than being great at all! A right spiritual hero . . . for whom these centuries, and many more to come yet, will be thankful to Heaven."[3] By the time of Luther's death, February 18, 1546, all nine documents were in existence, except for the last, the Formula of Concord, which did not appear until 1577.

One of Luther's early hymns, "We All Believe in One True God," is a powerful statement on the trinity of persons in the Godhead, witnessing in lyrical form to his unqualified support of the creeds. In gist it anticipated Luther's work on the catechisms.[4] Luther wrote a specific treatise on the creeds in 1537, "The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith," in which he also spoke warmly of the *Te Deum Laudamus* and its honored place in the church's liturgical tradition.

In a sermon given on Trinity Sunday, 1535, based on Romans 11:33-36, Luther stated trenchantly of the Apostles' Creed: "As the bee collects honey from many fair and beautiful flowers, so is this Creed collected, in appropriate brevity from the books of the beloved prophets and apostles—from the entire Scriptures—for children and unlearned

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[3]Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus: On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History* (London, Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons and New York: E. P. Dutton, 1929), 127.

[4]*LW* 53:271 and following. The hymn's lyrics date from 1524, but the melody is the version that first appeared in Joseph Klug's hymnal of 1533 at Wittenberg.

Christians. For brevity and clearness it could not have been better arranged, and it has remained in the Church from ancient time."[5] Luther would have little truck with an age like ours in which Christianity has largely become creedless, even opposed to systematized confessions of faith like the ecumenical creeds. Is it possible that the vapid malaise affecting many churches today results from such misguided, anemic sort of theology?

The second Diet of Speier in 1529 changed things for the Reformation heartland, quite literally cancelling out religious freedom. The next year, Charles V enjoyed friendlier relations with the papacy (he was crowned ceremoniously as emperor by Pope Clement VII at Bologna, February 24, 1530—the last emperor to be so crowned). Cooperating with the papacy, he summoned the dissident Protestant princes and leaders to a diet to be convened at Augsburg on April 6, 1530. Charles promised to be present in person. His summoning letter to Elector John Frederick of Saxony, his uncle, was somewhat mild, even conciliatory, pledging "to order all things in the German nation and in the Christian religion, in a right and honorable way."[6] But Elector John was not taken in by the seemingly sweet tones, nor were the other princes and leaders. When Charles and the imperial retinue finally (more than a month late!) rode into town along with the papal legate, Campeggio, Elector John and his Protestant allies greeted them with their presence, but stood bolt upright, refusing to bow ceremoniously to receive the papal blessing.

From the moment of their arrival in Augsburg the Lutheran party had worked feverishly to ready what they called their "Apology" for the faith. With them they brought various materials prepared earlier for various purposes. On their way to Augsburg they had met at the Elector's residence in Torgau. Luther was also present, though he could then proceed no farther than Coburg Castle for safety reasons. A condemned heretic had no rights and even if a safe conduct guarantee could have been obtained for him, Elector John would never have trusted the

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[5] J. N. Lenker, editor, *Sermons of Martin Luther: Church Postils* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), VIII:33.

[6] For the letter see Theodore E. Schmauk and C. Theodore Benze, *The Confessional Principle and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, as Embodying the Evangelical Confession of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board, 1911), 286.

imperial and papal authorities to honor it. At Torgau they worked on articles dealing with disputed issues and abuses in the church: the withholding of the cup from the laity; forbidding marriage for the clergy; the offense of the mass as sacrifice; obligatory auricular confession to the priest; required feasts and fasting; irrevocable monastic vows; and the secular power of bishops. These so-called polemical points eventually formed the last seven articles of the Augsburg Confession.

Philip Melanchthon, Luther's valued colleague, was the primary writer. He and the other trusted theologians had with them the so-called Schwabach Articles of summer 1529 and the Marburg Articles (colloquy with Zwingli) of autumn 1529. The initial twenty-one articles of the Augsburg Confession, all much more evangelical than the last seven, correspond closely to the above sources. Luther's hand and spirit are in all of them. In a letter Luther wrote to his sovereign, Elector John, from Coburg after he had received a draft of the proposed confession, he assured his prince of two things: first, his pleasure with the document, commenting "I know nothing to improve or change it," and second, the observation "I cannot step so softly and quietly."[7]

Everyone knew that Luther was the actual but absent protagonist at Augsburg, very much involved in the proceedings, especially in what was finally orally read—the booming voice of vice chancellor Christian Beyer was clearly audible in the courtyard of the bishop of Augsburg's residence outside the open windows of the meeting room. The reading was in German, allowing the public easily to understand what was said. A Latin version of the Confession was ready at the same time; both were handed over to Charles V, who immediately delegated the task of response to the papalist theologians in attendance. The Confutation, after many revisions, was ultimately readied and read as theirs and the emperor's answer, but a copy was never shared with the Protestant side. They managed to obtain one anyway plus the notes they had taken at the hearing.

Nothing, however, could match the impression that the Augsburg Confession had made, even on the papalist side. "The Bishop of Augsburg is reported to have said privately that it contained nothing but

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[7]*LW* 49:297-298.

the pure truth."[8] Even Charles V appeared to listen attentively, though Spanish, not German, was his mother tongue. The report is that he began to nod during the two-hour-long reading in the late afternoon. But, as Philip Schaff notes, his drowsiness must not "be construed as a mark of disrespect to the Lutherans, for he was likewise soundly asleep on the third of August when the Romish Confutation was read before the Diet."[9] There is no debating the point that the substantive content of the Confession is Luther's, as Schaff notes: "As to the doctrines Luther had a right to say, 'The Catechism, the Exposition of the Ten Commandments, and the *Augsburg Confession*, are mine.'"[10] Besides those mentioned, other sources in Luther's writings to which reference could be made, and undoubtedly was made, at that time are: the Ten Sermons on the Catechism, 1528;[11] his so-called "Great Confession" of the same year, specifically Part III;[12] and his very early devotional writings.[13] The literary composition may have been Melanchthon's, but "Luther was the primary author, Melanchthon the secondary author, of the contents."[14] This agrees with Charles Porterfield Krauth's assessment that "to a large extent Melanchthon's work is but an elaboration of Luther's, and to a large extent it is not an elaboration, but a reproduction."[15]

Also significant is the fact that in the period immediately before Augsburg, Luther was involved in several systematic or doctrinal productions, most notably the completion of the catechisms. In April and May 1529, Luther's Large Catechism and Small Catechism were published. The former is still one of the finest summaries of Christian faith and doctrine ever composed and the latter has rightly earned its accolade as "the gem of the Reformation," or "the layman's Bible." Both treat the Bible's chief parts or doctrine with ingenuous, uncomplicated

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[8]Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes* (New York, London: Harper & Brothers, 1919), I:226.

[9]Schaff, *Creeds*, I:227, note 1.

[10]Schaff, *Creeds*, I:229, note 3.

[11]*LW* 51:135 and following.

[12]*LW* 37:360 and following.

[13]One may compare *LW* 42 and 43.

[14]Schaff, *Creeds*, I:229.

[15]Charles P. Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation and its Theology* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1871), 219.

clarity, and both were ultimately included in the Book of Concord as official confessions of the Lutheran church.

The catechisms of Luther stand in their own right and light. But the fact is that they are often honored in and because of their connection to the Augsburg Confession. That document marked one of history's great, decisive moments. There undoubtedly is justifiable merit to Krauth's argument in its behalf when he states that "the man of the world should feel a deep interest in a document which bears to the whole cause of freedom as close a relation as the 'Declaration of Independence' does to our own as Americans."[16] The Confession's impact has extended far beyond the borders of the Lutheran Church itself.

Luther had no direct hand in the next document, which has become a standard in Lutheran theology, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession. Melanchthon began working on it while still at Augsburg and continued to do so back in Wittenberg. It was intended as a rebuttal of the Romanists' Confutation and he worked on it at the behest of his prince, Elector John Frederick, who, because of his heroic stance at Augsburg, has gone down in history to be remembered as John the Constant. Charles V had given the Protestant party until April 15, 1531 to accept the terms and the theology of the Confutation. This was totally unacceptable to them and Melanchthon's Apology constituted their theological response. At the same time the Lutheran leaders saw the need for a league to be formed in defense of their territories, should military pressure be brought to bear against them by the emperor.

The Apology has been termed a theological masterpiece. Not only did it decisively rebut the Confutation, but also continues to serve as a genuinely excellent commentary on the Augsburg Confession in Melanchthon's brilliant literary style. It was written in Latin but done into German that same year, 1531, by Melanchthon's colleague, Justus Jonas. The 1531 versions are the officially recognized ones, along with the German and Latin versions of the Augsburg Confession published in that same year. Both found their way into the Book of Concord. Melanchthon, ever the meticulous worker, continued to "fiddle" with both of these important documents in the ensuing years looking for new formulations, even making substantive changes. Luther deplored this indecisiveness

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[16]Krauth, *Conservative Reformation*, 212-213.

and yet he gave the Apology of 1531 his unqualified support, as he had the Confession itself, urging a group of refugee Lutherans banished from Leipzig to "adhere to our Confession and Apology."[17]

While the Confession and the Apology played such decisive roles, it was Luther's Smalcald Articles of 1537 that set papalist and Lutheran theology into sharpest, most discrete, and opposing poles. Luther prepared this document at the request of Elector John Frederick, the son of the heroic John the Constant, now deceased. Pope Paul III had announced a council for May 1537 at Mantua, Italy. The Lutheran princes and theologians were not eager for a meeting on terms that foreclosed open discussion and already condemned them before they were even heard. But they decided that they should be ready with their statement of the issues in case they were required to bear witness. Actually, a council never took place that year, and it was not until 1545, at Trent, that Pope Paul III convened the council.

Not aware that the council would be cancelled, the Lutheran leaders and theologians met in early 1537 at Smalcald. Ostensibly Luther's articles, which had been shared and read by the participants even prior to coming, were to provide the main agenda. Melanchthon gave his approval with some reservations, chiefly misgivings about the sharpness with which Luther addressed the papal tyranny and identified the papacy as the Antichrist. Luther also zeroed in on the abuses spawned by the Mass and monastic theology. In the last part, Part III, he dealt succinctly with fifteen topics or doctrines on which the papalist church had departed from the word of God. When Luther became desperately ill at the very outset of the meeting, Melanchthon was able to maneuver the agenda to a reconsideration of the Confession and the Apology. Luther remained too ill to remonstrate, and the end result was that his articles were not publicly read, though privately they were poured over and endorsed by all participants. The upshot of Melanchthon's tactics, ironically, was that the assembled princes pressed him, along with the other theologians, to compose a document called Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, known also as the Tractate. It is, if anything, even stronger in its denunciation of papal tyranny and the identification with the Antichrist. Moreover, it included an excellent statement on the

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[17]*Concordia Triglotta: the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 47.

priesthood of believers and authority in the church, especially the relation of the pastoral office to the congregation. It was duly subscribed at Smalcald and, along with Luther's articles, which had meanwhile been privately subscribed, came to be included likewise in the Book of Concord. The Tractate is most often spoken of as an appendix to the Smalcald Articles.

Difficult days followed Luther's death. On the papal side Paul III, under political pressure, finally managed to convene the Tridentine Council, which among other things successfully launched the counter Reformation. On the political scene Charles V's forces defeated the Lutheran allies, even capturing Elector John Frederick and Philip of Hesse. Eventually, however, the Lutheran side prevailed and, with the Peace of Passau (1552) followed by the Religious Peace of Augsburg (1555), achieved the right under imperial law to exercise their faith freely.

Meanwhile, with Luther gone, the church that bore his name became terribly torn by controversy. It was often bitter, usually involving substantive theological issues, at times partisan and fractious over who really had the mind of Luther. The disputes ranged over the nature of original sin, the role of the human will in conversion, the place of faith and good works in a believer's life, the proper distinction and function of law and gospel, the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament, the personal union of the divine and human natures in Christ's person, eternal election, church rites and adiaphora, and the like.

The Formula of Concord of 1577 accomplished the purpose for which Elector August of Saxony had called a select group of six theologians to Cloister Bergen, to settle the disputes and restore peace and harmony to the church. It was the distillation of very careful work, other earlier efforts by individuals and committees. The whole story is too long and involved to rehearse here.[18] The Formula, with its Epitome, is the most comprehensive of the Lutheran Symbols. It is a strong theological piece of work, precise in formulations and definitions, rich with biblical references, and careful thetical and antithetical arrangement. Martin Chemnitz and Jacob Andreae are usually and with justice mentioned as the chief writers and architects of the finished product. While Schaff

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[18]One may see E. F. Klug, *Getting Into the Formula of Concord* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977).

labels it a "sectarian symbol," he, at the same time, acknowledges its high theological quality and efficacy in accomplishing the purpose for which it was drawn up, admitting that "it is quite probable that Luther himself would have heartily endorsed it."[19]

Confessional Lutherans today who assert and define their theology in accordance with the norm of the Book of Concord and the nine symbols it embraces value and wholeheartedly support the Formula of Concord. They deem it to have more than mere historical import. They resonate more to Krauth's estimate, perhaps overstated in the minds of some but not all, that "but for the Formula of Concord it may be questioned whether Protestantism could have been saved to the world."[20] At least confessionally-minded Lutherans are not likely to quibble about the accuracy of this prognostication for the Lutheran church. The Formula was and is a bulwark for the faith, first bravely spoken and defended at Worms and then at Augsburg.[21]

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[19]Klug, *Getting Into the Formula*, 338.

[20]Klug, *Getting Into the Formula*, 302.

[21]An abridged, shortened and altered version appeared as "Luther's Will and Testaments," *Christian History* 12 (1993): 48.

An Evangelical Critique of Modern Western Culture:
Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On

Anthony J. Steinbronn

Jerry Lee Lewis, through the use of a dance metaphor in his hit song *Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On*, provided the North American culture with a keen insight into the emerging revolution of the 1960s. Or, as Ken Myers maintains, "hell had been waiting in the wings for over a century; it finally broke loose in the 1960s."[1]

Pierre Babin documents the "shaking" influence of the audiovisual age in which nothing is solid anymore and the old formulas are breaking.[2] The result of this constant and relentless shaking and questioning upon the receptor is fragmentation[3] and disorientation, along with the loss of all moral[4] and epistemic bearings.[5]

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[1]Kenneth Myers, *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1989), 118.

[2]John Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 71-73. John Stott supports Babin's contention that the electronic age causes a destructuring process to occur by which people are made intellectually uncritical, emotionally insensitive, psychologically confused, and morally disordered.

[3]Pierre Babin, *A New Era in Religious Communication* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 42: "We crumble into fragments because everything we see on television, everything we hear on the radio, and everything we read in magazines come to us piece by piece, without any logical connections."

[4]Babin, *A New Era*, 43-44: "So we hear, read, and see countless things that mean nothing to us, either at the level of usefulness or at the spiritual level. We are crazy about excitement and sensation. What, then, can become of us after a few years of this experience? We will think that it is normal. And what can a child think, spending life watching television? Surely that there are no more rules, that what is exciting is life itself, and that in such a life everything is possible and everything is permitted."

[5]Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1985), 1:6. According to Francis Schaeffer there has been, since the period of 1913 to 1940, a major shift in our way of approaching truth and knowing. Before that period of time, it was still possible to discuss what was right and wrong, what was true and false because everyone would have been working with the same presuppositions in the areas of epistemology and methodology concerning absolutes.

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In the days of a more Christian culture, a lone individual with the Bible could judge and warn society, regardless of the majority vote, because there was an absolute by which to judge. There was an absolute for both morals and law. But to the extent that the Christian consensus is gone, this absolute is gone as social force.[6]

If Babin and Schaeffer are correct in their observations, what is the origin and substance of this new way of thinking and acting? What are the consequences of this "shaking" upon modern Western culture? What missiological strategies should be employed in order to do His work in this modern and postmodern age?

To understand properly modern Western culture, there are three main approaches that have been advocated: (1) the history of ideas; (2) cultural anthropology, which interprets thought in the setting of human cultures and customs; and (3) the sociology of knowledge, which interprets the impact of everyday experience on all that passes for knowledge.[7]

The History of Ideas

Origins of the modern western worldview

In the Western world, up to the end of the seventeenth century, the theistic worldview was clearly dominant. All Christians would have subscribed to the same set of presuppositions: "The Triune personal God of the Bible existed; He had revealed Himself to us and could be known; the universe was His creation; human beings were His special creation."[8]

Moreover, Christianity had so penetrated the Western world that, whether people believed in Christ or acted as Christians do, they all lived in a context of ideas influenced and informed by the Christian faith.[9] Furthermore, biblical doctrine was preached not as a truth, but as *the truth*. These truth-claims formed not only the religious base of society but the cultural, legal, and governmental bases as well.

A major turning point in the history of the Western consciousness was experienced in a single generation between 1680 and 1715. In this period,

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[6]Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1985), 5:223.

[7]Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger Files* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 38.

[8]James Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 23.

[9]Sire, *Universe*, 24.

for the first time in the history of Christian Europe, a sizable number of sensitive and educated people repudiated Christianity as having any unique and superior truth and took their stand on other ground. What happened in the Enlightenment was that transcendentally free man achieved, at least in his own self-consciousness, an emancipation from the transcendent God.[10]

From an intellectual point of view, the modern world began with the Enlightenment, with that project aiming to account for the whole life strictly from within the bounds of natural reason.[11] The modern world cast itself loose from all external authorities and saw in this double action — its rejection of authority and its location of the human interpreter in the center of reality — the ground of all human freedom.[12]

Richard Tarnas postulates that the new psychological constitution of the modern character had been developing since the high Middle Ages, had conspicuously emerged in the Renaissance, was sharply clarified and empowered by the Scientific Revolution, then extended and solidified in the course of the Enlightenment. By the nineteenth century, it had achieved mature form.[13]

In our time, humanism has replaced Christianity as the consensus of the West. The dominant ideas of our culture are derived from secular humanism and provide the modern man's view of himself and of the world.

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[10]Willis Glover, *Biblical Origins of Modern Secular Culture* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1984), 10, 12.

[11]Modern Western culture began with the Renaissance. The Renaissance period was marked by a strong humanist tradition based upon classical Greek and Roman elements of ancient antiquity. The Enlightenment represented the outgrowth of the fourteenth- through sixteenth-century Renaissance humanism and was a movement in the intellectual history of Western man in which traditional perspectives and loyalties were abandoned in favor of man-centered alternatives.

[12]David Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 60.

[13]Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind* (New York: Harmony Books, 1991), 319. Also, "The direction and quality of that character reflected a gradual but finally radical shift of psychological allegiance from God to man, from dependence to independence, from otherworldliness to this world, from the transcendent to the empirical, from myth and belief to reason and fact, from universals to particulars, from a supernaturally determined static cosmos to a naturally determined evolving cosmos, and from a fallen humanity to an advancing one."

Humanism

Humanism is the system whereby man, beginning absolutely by himself, tries rationally to build out from himself (having only man as his integration point) to find all knowledge, meaning, and value.[14] In an essay on "What is Humanism," Paul Kurtz identifies three basic humanistic principles that provide the core assumptions of humanism: naturalism, anthropocentrism, and scientism.[15]

The first principle of humanism is the rejection of the supernaturalist worldview that sees God as the ultimate source of all existence and value. In its place, humanism reduces everything to a single, physical plane in which only matter exists. The second principle of humanism is the view that value is relative to man and to what human beings find to be worthwhile in experience. Theism's transcendent source for values is rejected, with man alone as the measure of all things.[16] The third principle of humanism is the view that scientific knowledge can be applied to the solution of all problems as well as the testing of all human beliefs and moral judgment.[17] The key feature of this new science was the combination of mathematical and experimental observation.[18]

Cultural Anthropology

Transcendence has been reduced to a rumor

Scientists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continued to use the word "God," but pushed God increasingly to the edges of their explanatory systems. Finally, scientists in this stream of thought moved

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[14]Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 85. The Enlightenment revolution also unleashed and created the proud, erect creator who would remake all of life in his or her own image.

[15]Francis A. Schaeffer, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1985), 5:282. "By humanistic base we mean the fundamental idea that men and women can begin from themselves and derive the standards by which to judge all matters."

[16]Reuben Abel, in *Man is the Measure*, traces the origin of modern anthropocentric thought to an assertion by Protagoras that man is the measure of all things: of those that are, that they are; and of those that are not, that they are not.

[17]Arthur Frank Holmes, *Contours of a World View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 18.

[18]Jeffery Hopper, *Understanding Modern Theology I* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987),17. The basic factors involved in this new scientific inquiry were observation, imaginative hypotheses, experimentation, and mathematical description.

to the idea of a completely closed system that left no place for God. Thus the reigning plausibility structure advocated that there was no way that God could enter and act in this closed system.[19]

Carl Henry, in *Toward a Recovery of a Christian Belief*, laments the meteoric rise of secular humanism and deconstructionistic thought in the twentieth century when he notes that "humanity's coming of age requires rejecting all transcendentally fixed and final authority."[20] According to Henry, every last vestige of transcendence is being removed and replaced by a new mentality in which the notion of a living God is viewed as a primitive illusion. The tide has now shifted to a form of naked paganism in which any emphasis on an objectively existing deity is expunged from Western thought.

In the Modern worldview, man is autonomous. Nothing is to be judged in relation to an absolute or a revelation or a transcendent reality. In theory, nothing is sacred, nothing is beyond the reach of questioning and remaking.[21] As a result, the individual believes himself to be the measure of both reality and moral principle — there are no standards, there is no objective measure of right and wrong, and norms are delusions.[22]

According to sociologist Peter Berger, we live in a world without windows. By this phrase, Berger means that both social institutions and individual lives are increasingly explained, as well as justified, in terms devoid of transcendent referents.[23] Thus, the reality of ordinary life is increasingly understood as the only reality — a reality without purpose or meaning.

In answer to how popular culture influences Americans in general and Christians in particular, Ken Myers sees popular culture as a "culture of diversion," preventing people from asking questions about their origin, destiny, and about the meaning of life.[24] In his study, two aspects stand

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[19]Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 69.

[20]Carl F. H. Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 23.

[21]Myers, *All God's Children*, 71.

[22]Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 167.

[23]Peter Berger, *Against the World For the World* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 10.

[24]Myers, *All God's Children*, 56. "One of the novelties of our present situation is the fact that such a large proportion of the population can spend such a large proportion

out—a quest for novelty and a desire for instant gratification.[25] In other words, the orientation of the modern individual is toward the *new, now*.[26]

The critical spirit

The thinkers of the Enlightenment spoke of their age as the age of reason. Immanuel Kant, in answer to the question of what Enlightenment was, used the famous phrase "dare to know,"[27] defining the central thrust of our culture.[28]

As a result of autonomous man's daring to know, the Enlightenment resulted in man's emergence from his self-imposed non-age and required nothing but the freedom to make public use of one's reason in *all* matters. Thus, no alleged divine revelation, no tradition, and no dogma, however hallowed, has the right to veto its exercise.[29]

We live in a society not controlled by accepted dogma but by the critical spirit. The mark of intellectual maturity and competence is to subject every alleged truth to the critical scrutiny of reason. Consequently, we now live in an age of systematic skepticism in which every supposed truth must be critically examined afresh and the old traditions and

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of its time seeking diversion."

[25]Myers, *All God's Children*, 64. "The quest for novelty is not simply a search for new distractions; it involves the notion that a new thing will be better than the old one." 66: "[C. S. Lewis] goes on to say that this unconscious conviction that the new is therefore better is the greatest difference between modern men and women and their pre-modern ancestors."

[26]Myers, *All God's Children*, 65. "Indeed, society has done more than passively accept innovation; it has provided a market which eagerly gobbles up the new, because it believes it to be superior in value to all older forms. Thus, our culture has an unprecedented mission: it is an official, ceaseless search for a new sensibility." Myers, 67: "Not only did modernity impart to popular culture a preoccupation with the new, it also created a taste for the new now." Again (114): One attribute of modernism is the *eclipse of distance* and the promise that everything is offered to us immediately. Moreover, "nothing worthwhile is beyond your reach right now. Any experience, sensation, idea or fantasy can be yours if you have enough money, confidence or sex appeal. There is no distance between you and any good thing."

[27]Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 25. "'Dare to know' implies that the individual has the potential and therefore also the right freely to exercise his reason in the search of reality."

[28]Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 39.

[29]Harold Lindsell, *The New Paganism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 250.

dogmas must be exposed to the acids of critical doubt with only what survives being retained. The rest can be thrown away. That is the only safe path from the darkness of superstition, dogma, and tradition to the clear light of truth.[30] Thus this new method of inquiry and reflection has become, for the educated man of today, the final arbiter of all questions of fact, existence, and intellectual assent. It is the revolutionary call for men to throw off the chains of a brutish existence and to dare to think.[31]

It required nothing less than a transformation of the intellectual idea that had possessed the heart of Christendom for centuries, the ideal of belief. Kant celebrated the will-to-truth more than the will-to-believe, investigation more than certainty, and autonomy more than obedience to authority.[32]

Pluralism as the reigning plausibility structure

The distinctive feature of this culture is that there is no generally acknowledged plausibility structure that is accepted as normative.[33] Modern man's viewpoint in the post-Christian world is without any categories, and without any base upon which to build.[34] It is the view that we have diversity here in this world but we have no access to ultimate unity and no way to bring the diverse things of our experience into a coherent whole. We have particulars but no universals; relatives but no absolutes.[35]

Furthermore, in a pluralist society, any confident statement of ultimate belief, any claim to announce the truth about God and His purpose for the world, is liable to be dismissed as ignorant, arrogant, or dogmatic.[36] According to Peter Berger, pluralism greatly affects the situation of religion because where worldviews coexist and compete as plausible alternatives to each other, the credibility of all is undermined. Each of us,

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[30]Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 28.

[31]Van A. Harvey, *The Historian & the Believer* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 39.

[32]Harvey, *The Historian*, 39.

[33]Newbigin, *Foolishness*, 53. A plausibility structure is a "structure of assumptions and practices which determine what beliefs are plausible and what are not."

[34]Francis A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man*, in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1985), 5:6.

[35]R. C. Sproul, *Lifeviews* (Pasadena: Revell, 1986), 114.

[36]Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 10.

bombarded by these reality-defining possibilities, is tempted to create his own syncretistic worldviews, picking and choosing the combination that meets his needs.

Man lives in an audiovisual age

Pierre Babin observes that there is a new, all-encompassing culture that has entered the modern world, namely, the audiovisual medium. Moreover, Babin believes that the audiovisual medium is the key to interpreting our contemporary culture, in which the message is not in the words but in the effect produced by the one who is speaking, with modulation being the essence of the audiovisual language.[37]

In Babin's analysis, *E* stands for *electricity* and everything that flows from electricity. One major consequence of electricity is that the human being is taken into a vast network that "causes a change in habits, life-style and moral behavior and is the main formal cause of moral change."[38]

Notice, observes Babin, how everything has been thrown into disorder by the *E civilization*. Everything is said and done in the new generation. From now on, everything is in the eye of the spectator with no objective criteria to judge.[39]

Man lives in a world governed by sociological law

If there is no absolute standard, then one cannot say, in a final sense, that anything is right and wrong. Everything is "how you look at it" and we live with situational ethics in which every situation is judged subjectively.[40] Consequently, for many North Americans, moral character and existence are defined by preferences. In the absence of any objectifiable criteria of right and wrong, the self and its feelings become our only moral guide.[41]

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[37]Babin, *A New Era*, 5-6.

[38]Babin, *A New Era*, 41.

[39]Babin, *A New Era*, 47.

[40]Francis Schaeffer, *No Little People*, in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1985), 3:55.

[41]Robert Bellah, *Habits of the Heart* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 79-80. "Values" turn out to be the incomprehensible, rationally indefensible thing that the individual chooses when he or she has thrown off the last vestige of external influence and reached pure, contentless freedom.

When a Christian consensus existed, it gave a base for law. Today law is only what most of the people think at that moment of history and there is no higher law. In such a moral climate, modern man has no real boundary condition for what he should do; he is left only with what he can do. Thus, the moral "oughts" are only what is sociologically acceptable at the moment.[42]

According to Francis Schaeffer, as the Christian consensus dies, few alternatives remain: (1) hedonism, in which every person does his own thing; (2) fifty-one percent vote, whereby law and morals become a matter of averages; and (3) the elite, consisting of academic and scientific intellectuals and government bureaucrats, who determine and give authoritative absolutes.[43]

The Sociology of Knowledge

Three key pressures

Since our intellectual world has died, modern life is being defined more and more by its social processes and cultural environment and less by any ideology.[44] The human spirit is now being moved not by profound thinking but by the experience of living.

The rise of modernization has brought three key pressures to bear on the social location of religion: secularization,[45] privatization,[46] and

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[42]Schaeffer, *How Should?* 237.

[43]Schaeffer, *How Should?* 225.

[44]Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 287.

[45]Guinness, *Gravedigger Files*, 61. Secularization is the process by which the social and cultural significance of religion in the central sectors of modern society, such as the worlds of science, technology, bureaucracy, and so on, are displaced making religious ideas less meaningful and religious institutions more marginal. As more and more areas of life are classified, calculated and controlled by the use of reason, the systematic application of reason as the best tool for mastering reality is affirmed and strengthened. Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford, 1982), 176. As a result, "religious perceptions and goals, religiously-induced sensitivities, religiously-inspired morality, and religious socialization appear to be of no immediate relevance to the operation of the modern social system."

[46]Privatization is the process by which modernization produces a cleavage between the public world and the private spheres of life and focuses the private sphere as the special arena for the expansion of individual freedom and fulfillment.

pluralization.[47] Due to these social forces operative in the West, "sector after sector has been successfully freed from the influence of the Christian faith so that Christian institutions and ideas are displaced from the center of modern society and relegated to the margins."[48]

The world has come of age

Bonhoeffer's "the world has come of age" is one in which the "religious hypothesis" is no longer needed by man—he can get along very well without it.   Bonhoeffer observed that, as people have to use "god" as an explanation less and less and have to call on "god" for help less and less, this "god is being edged out of the world," to the periphery of people's conscious world.[49]

This displacement of the "religious hypothesis" is promoted through, what Lesslie Newbigin calls, the bilingual nature of public education. For most of our early lives, through the accepted systems of public education, we have been trained to use a language which claims to make sense of the world without the hypothesis of God.

For an hour or two a week we use the other language, the language of the Bible. We use the mother tongue of the church each Sunday, but for the rest of our lives we use the language imposed by the occupying power.[50]

In *Twilight of a Great Civilization*,[51] Carl Henry pronounces a warning that the barbarians are coming and that they threaten to undermine the foundations of Western civilization. It is this new barbarianism, grown out of a humanistic rejection of God, and the Judeo-Christian foundation of Western culture that has caused our culture to embrace a new

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[47]Berger, *Against the World*, 11. Pluralization is the process by which the number of options in the private sphere of modern society rapidly multiplies at all levels, especially at the levels of worldviews, faiths and ideologies. In the words of Peter Berger, "modernity produces an awful lot of noise which makes it difficult to listen for the gods."

[48]Guinness, *Gravedigger Files*, 60.

[49]Hopper, *Understanding Modern Theology*, 28. As more and more was understood by science, the credibility of notions of a causally intervening God has been more and more reduced.

[50]Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 49.

[51]Carl F. H. Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization: The Drift Toward Neo-paganism* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1988).

mentality: no fixed truth, no final good, no ultimate meaning and purpose, and God is an illusion.

Due to the cultural, scientific, and philosophical revolutions of the past three centuries, we have a significantly reinterpreted Western worldview which has caused a great "shaking" to take place. It appears that the observations of Babin and Schaeffer are valid, namely, everything is being questioned and the old formulas that, in the past, have defined our moral[52] and epistemic boundaries[53] are breaking away, thereby allowing a new *Zeitgeist* and *Weltanschauung* to take its place.

All of this gives us today an almost monolithic consensus, an almost unified voice shouting at us a fragmented concept of the universe and of life. And as it comes to us from every side and with many voices, it is difficult not to be infiltrated by it.[54]

Ours is a post-Christian world in which Christianity, not only in the number of Christians but in cultural emphasis and cultural result, is no longer the consensus or ethos of our society. It is a kind of worldly wisdom that leaves God and His revelation out of the picture and thereby ends up with a completely distorted conception of reality.[55]

Bent on the pursuit of autonomous freedom—freedom from any restraint, and especially from God's truth and moral absolutes—our culture has set itself on the course of self-destruction.[56] As a consequence,

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[52]Babin, *A New Era*, 46: "How are we to remain steady in a world that has lost its traditional points of reference? How are we to cling to what is true and good in a world swept away by the winds of every idea and every passion?"

[53]Eugene A. Nida, *Religion Across Cultures* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1968), 52-53: "Without God, and the supernatural sanctions which came from God, where is man to find those superhuman categories which will justify his social structure and tell him where he has come from and where he is going? If God has been eliminated, how can man any longer validate his existence and ways of life?"

[54]Schaeffer, *How Should?* 195. "Modern pessimism and modern fragmentation have spread in three different ways to people of our culture and to people across the world. Geographically, it spread from the European mainland to England, after a time jumping the Atlantic to the United States. Culturally, it spread in the various disciplines from philosophy, to art, to music, to general culture, and to theology. Socially, it spread from the intellectuals to the educated and then through the mass media to everyone." One may also see 204.

[55]Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1985), 4:313-314.

[56]Schaeffer, *Evangelical Disaster*, 315-316.

all morality becomes relative, law becomes arbitrary, and society moves toward disintegration. The world spirit of our age rolls on and on claiming to be autonomous and crushing all that we cherish in its path.[57] Seventy years ago could we have imagined that unborn children would be killed by the millions here in our country? Or that we would have no freedom of speech when it comes to speaking of God and biblical truth in our public schools? Or that every form of sexual perversion would be promoted by the entertainment media?   Or that marriage, raising children, and family life would be objects of attack?[58]

We are engaged in a conflict which takes two forms. The first of these has to do with the way we think—the ideas we have and the way we view the world. The second has to do with the way we live and act. Both of these conflicts—in the area of ideas and in the area of actions—are important, and in both areas Bible-believing Christians find themselves locked in battle with the surrounding culture of our day.[59]

For many, modern man lives in a world in which everything is decreated—everything is autonomous.[60] How do we speak to an age made spiritually deaf by its skepticism and morally color blind by its relativism?[61] In the estimation of Lesslie Newbigin, there is no higher priority for the research work of missiologists than to ask: What would be involved in a genuinely missionary encounter between God's word and this modern Western culture?[62]

Biblical insights toward worldview understanding

King Solomon observed that "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Based upon Solomon's judgment, it should be possible for us to examine the Scriptures and find biblical examples that illustrate the modern and postmodern condition.

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[57]Schaeffer, *Evangelical Disaster*, 309-310: "Here we have world spirit of the age – autonomous man setting himself up as God, in defiance of the knowledge and the moral and spiritual truth which God has given. Here is the reason why we have a moral breakdown in every area of life."

[58]Schaeffer, *Evangelical Disaster*, 310.

[59]Schaeffer, *Evangelical Disaster*, 312.

[60]Schaeffer, *Pollution*, 32.

[61]Guinness, *Gravedigger Files*, 235.

[62]Newbigin, *Foolishness*, 3.

The first humanists—There is the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 whereby Eve sought to displace God and His revelation, and make judgments autonomous from God. As the first humanists Eve, and then Adam, believed that they could stand alongside God as an independent power; instead, they were no longer ridden by God but by the evil one.

The generation of Noah and a distant, spectator God—There is the condition of humankind before the flood in which every imagination of man's heart was evil continually. Instead of clinging to God's word as proclaimed through the building and preaching ministry of Noah (Genesis 6; Hebrews 11:7; 2 Peter 2:5), humankind was living out a this-worldly orientation and advocating a naturalistic, closed-system view of the universe. There is no way, the ancients assured themselves, that God could intervene and send a flood as Noah had proclaimed. Moreover, God is not near, His judgments are not a controlling factor in history, and He is but a mere spectator to the affairs of everyday life.

Humankind's self-glorification at Babel—There is the post-flood generation of Genesis 11 in which humankind, collectively, rejects the *Missio Dei* of filling the world with His Name and living a life which brings glory to Him. Instead, the people of that time used their unity in language to engage in the worship of autonomous self and the construction of a society based upon humankind's unregenerate will and design.

What is truth?—There is Pilate's questioning of Jesus and his skepticism regarding the possibility of knowing truth. As a result, he rejects Jesus' interpretation of truth and history, namely, that Christ is truth itself and the meaning of history.

Everyone did what was right in his own eyes—There is the condition of Israel at the time of the Judges in which, morally, every person did what was right in his own eyes. Apparently man lived for the moment, constructing his own values devoid of transcendent, moral referents.

Ancient worldliness—There is the time of Moses, as he spoke his final words to the people of Israel before his death, when he warned them of the dangers concerning prosperity and worldliness. As the people of God are blessed, they will be tempted to follow after the foreign gods among them and forget the Lord in their thinking and in their behaviors. They may keep the form of religion, but the normative authority of God's word would be replaced with the pagan allegiances, beliefs, and practices of the nations that came into contact with Israel. To counter this displacement

of the Christian faith from the lives of God's people, Moses encouraged the people with the words of Deuteronomy 6.

A marginalized faith — Finally, there is the powerful story of God's people during the time of Hosea and Micah. They frequented the house of God but they had marginalized the faith in their lives. God came to them and called them to repentance with these words:

> For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:8).

In other words, the Christian life is to be lived out in a comprehensive manner since all of life is lived out *coram Deo* and *coram hominibus*; that is, God wants our faith and our neighbor needs our justice, our love, and acts of mercy.

Biblical insights toward worldview change

The Christian home as the center of discipleship formation

The most important place for instilling a biblical view of reality and of life is the Christian family where a biblical worldview and meaning system is communicated through the teaching office of the parents and through the loving, forgiving socialization of the faith that takes place in the Christian home (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

It remains part of God's design that the Christian home be *the* place where the family members learn and acquire a biblical worldview as they hear God's revealed truth about ultimate and external reality, about the nature and orientation of man, about truth and ethics, about the comprehensive nature of the Christian faith, and about the proper interpretation of history.

The centrality of the Christian community within society

The early colonial church was located at the town's center. According to David Wells, one of the first things the Puritans had done when building a new town was to establish the church building in a position of prominence, at the center of the community. In doing so, they saw the town's church as both the place where God addresses His people through the preached word and as the knot that bound society together, the hub

into which all of life's spokes were fixed. It was their hope and intention that the Christian faith permeated all of the town's life.[63]

It is Loren Mead's conviction that religious congregations are the most important carriers of meaning, purpose, direction, and human community that we have, with one exception — the nuclear and extended family. Throughout history, congregations have been an anchor, a place of stability, holding up a transcendent vision of the meaning of life.

Government as an agent of order in a world of chaos

One of the core elements of the modern and postmodern worldview is the postulate of human autonomy and a rage against order. For the committed modernist, the crucial insistence is that *experience* is to have no boundaries to its cravings — that there is nothing sacred.

However, man is not autonomous. There are boundaries that have been ordered by the Creator which are to define and govern our existence *coram Deo, coram hominibus*, and *coram mundo*. The church has the responsibility before God and before our neighbor to remind and challenge temporal authority to remain faithful to its divine purpose of defining and upholding the boundaries for both Christian believers and unregenerate humankind.

Historical insights toward worldview change

We must have absolutes and a solid epistemology if our existence is to have meaning, since morals, values, and the basis of knowledge are all derived from ultimate reality and absolutes. Because the reformers did not mix humanism with the formal principle of Scripture alone,[64] they had no problem in deriving meaning for the particulars of reality, truth, morals, and the social location of religion.[65]

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[63]Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 24.

[64]Schaeffer, *How Should?* 121. In contrast with the Renaissance humanists, the Reformers refused to accept the autonomy of human reason, which acts as though the human mind is infinite, with all knowledge within its realm. Rather, they took seriously the Bible's own claim for itself – that it is the only final authority."

[65]Schaeffer, *Evangelical Disaster*, 309. The Reformation "not only brought forth a clear preaching of the Gospel, it also gave shape to society as a whole — including government, how people viewed the world, and the full spectrum of culture."

In general, Christian theology is recognizable by the fact that it is based on the great fundamental axiom: God has revealed Himself in the world of space and time. However, this axiom cannot be demonstrated but can only be received through faith; therefore, plain and simple unbelief is the only reason for rejecting it and throwing it aside.[66] Furthermore, only regenerate people can truly understand divine truths for Christian theology is the theology of the regenerate.

Luther's Model

Martin Luther understood the great challenge and necessity of translating the mental stuff that we have received through the teaching office of the church and home and, then, applying these reality-defining truth-claims to the experiences of daily living.

For Luther, his evangelical ministry was one of understanding and application. He was taught of God through the activity of the Holy Spirit as he studied the Scriptures so that he might grow in his knowledge of God and acquire a view of reality that was in conformity with God's revealed will.[67] Luther sought to understand *what does this mean* as derived from the authoritative and normative truth-claims of Scripture so that he could interpret, explain, and communicate *what does this mean* for meaningful application within every area of human life.

This missiological theory and practice of Martin Luther is the missiological model that must be employed by God's people in this post-Constantinian age. In order to accomplish this we need to understand our own worldview,[68] but also that of other people, so that we can first understand and then genuinely communicate with others in a pluralistic society.[69] Then, as Christians, we are not only to know the right

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[66]Newbigin, *New Era*, 92: "There can be no coercive proof that those who believe are right. If there could be, revelation would be unnecessary."

[67]J. Pelikan and H. Lehmann, editors, *Luther's Works: American Edition*, 55 volumes (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955 and following), 34:285-286. Luther's method of understanding and acquiring a Biblical view of reality possessed three elements: oratio, meditatio, tentatio.

[68]Ronald Nash, *World-Views in Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 14. The most important step for Christians is "to become informed about the Biblical worldview, a comprehensive, systematic view of life and of the world as a whole."

[69]Sire, *Universe*, 15.

worldview but consciously to act upon that worldview so as to influence society in all its parts and facets across the whole spectrum of life.[70]

The Symbol of Our Time

At the time of the Reformation, the reformers wrote "the symbol of our time" when they wrote the first and unaltered Augsburg Confession. The symbol was a correct exposition of the faith, "setting forth how at various times the Holy Scriptures were understood by contemporaries in the church of God with reference to controverted articles, and how contrary teachings were rejected and condemned."[71]

The methodology of the reformers, in the construction of their symbol, was to state the issue at hand and, then, proceed to present affirmative theses and contrary antitheses. Those who read the symbol were not left in doubt as to what the reformers were stating to be true, concerning the issues at hand, based upon the normative truth-claims of Scripture.

One of the benefits of constructing a "symbol of our time" is that such a symbol would affirm and model a proper way of theological and public discourse in an age whose epistemological method is one of synthesis and not thesis-antithesis. Moreover, such a symbol would also give to God's people solid and biblical answers to the issues of our day so that a relevant message can be communicated and lived out in the public square.

At this time in the church's history, if we were to write "the symbol of our time," what are the issues that are confronting our society and our church? What affirmative theses and corresponding antitheses could be formulated concerning these issues based upon a comprehensive exposition of Scripture? The church has the freedom to construct such a symbol in our day. The confessional writings continue to possess ongoing relevance and meaning for our age. However, the world has changed much in five hundred years and there are new issues at hand that must be addressed by the people of God.

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[70]Schaeffer, *How Should?* 254.
[71]T. G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1959), 465.8.

Modern, evangelical insights toward worldview change

Let us be more than a popular, folk religion

According to Os Guinness, "secularization makes the Christian faith seem less real, privatization makes it seem merely a private preference, and pluralization makes it seem just one among many." Unless Christianity is able to break these three chains, it may never be more than a harmless, if popular, folk religion.[72] How can Christianity overcome the losses of comprehensiveness, certainty and compelling power?

A Reformational position would begin by examining the Person and work of the Holy Spirit who is no skeptic, but who (1) speaks existent realities (certainty); (2) brings order to chaos and universals to the particulars of human experience (comprehensiveness); and (3) grants power and purpose for daily living through one's vocation and through His abiding presence as Comforter and Counselor (compelling power).

Due to the dialectical thinking of Hegel and the existential thinking of Sartre and Camus, modern man has difficulty in making sense of the particulars of existential living. Where is one to find universals which grant meaning and coherence to the particulars of life?

For the Christian believer, God has spoken truth concerning Himself and truth concerning man, history, and the universe in a linguistic prepositional form.[73] Because this is so, there is unity over the whole field of knowledge. Therefore, on the basis of the Scriptures, while we do not have exhaustive knowledge, we have true and unified knowledge and can "know something of both universals and particulars and this includes the meaning and proper use of the particulars."[74]

Christian Apologetics

Francis Schaeffer offers two purposes for Christian apologetics: (1) the defense of the Christian faith because in every age historic Christianity will be under attack; and (2) we have a responsibility to communicate the gospel in our generation. This kind of Christian apologetic should be thought out and practiced in the rough and tumble of living, in contact

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[72]Guinness, *Gravedigger Files*, 161, 221.
[73]Schaeffer, *God Who Is There*, 100.
[74]Schaeffer, *Pollution*, 22.

with the present generation, so that one is conversant with the reality of the questions being asked by his own and the next generation. Then, and only then, will a person be able to communicate the gospel to the present generation in terms[75] that they can understand.[76]

Unmasking the Powers

From its inception, "the Christian church has been involved in battles involving ideas, theories, systems of thought, presuppositions, and arguments since the witness of the church has always taken place within a pluralistic milieu. Signs of such battles in the world of ideas can be found all through the New Testament."[77]

For Lesslie Newbigin, our Christian witness requires today the unmasking of the powers. "It calls for a new kind of enlightenment, namely the opening up of the underlying assumptions of a pagan society, the asking of the unasked questions, the probing of unrecognized presuppositions."[78]

It is plain, writes Newbigin, "that we do not defend the Christian message by domesticating it within the reigning plausibility structure"; instead, it is the business of Christianity to "challenge the plausibility structure in light of God's revelation of the real meaning of history."[79] Furthermore, it is through its message and communal life, as His people, that they are able to give rise to a new plausibility structure and to "a radically different vision of things from those how shape all human cultures apart from the Gospel. The Church, therefore, as the bearer of the Gospel, inhibits a plausibility structure which is at variance with, and

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[75]Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape From Reason*, in *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1985)."If a person is to really communicate with a people, he must learn another language – that of the thought-forms of the people to whom he speaks" (1:270). "Every generation of Christians has the problem of learning how to speak meaningfully to its own age. It cannot be solved without an understanding of the changing existential situation which it faces. If we are to communicate the Christian faith effectively, therefore, we must know and understand the thought-forms of our own generation" (1:207).

[76]Schaeffer, *God Who Is There*, 151, 153.

[77]Nash, *World-Views*, 12.

[78]Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 220.

[79]Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 10, 96.

which calls into question, those that govern all human cultures without exception."[80]

The model for our ministry is based upon the ministry of our Lord who, in His earthly ministry, unmasked the powers and so drew their hostility on Himself. In a similar manner, "the Spirit working through the life and witness of the missionary church will overturn the world's most fundamental beliefs,[81] proving the world wrong in respect to sin, of righteousness, and of judgment."[82]

Removing the roof

Every person we speak with has a set of presuppositions—the basic way an individual looks at life, his basic worldview, the grid through which he sees the world. These presuppositions rest on that which a person considers to be the truth of what exists. These presuppositions also provide the basis for their values and therefore the basis for their decisions.[83]

Yet, no matter what a person may believe, he cannot change the reality of what is. Thus every man, irrespective of his philosophical system, is caught. Man cannot make his own universe and then live in it; *somewhere* there is a point, or a series of points, of inconsistency.[84]

In other words, every man has built a roof over his head to shield himself at the point of tension—the point where a man has reached the end of his presuppositions. The roof is built as a protection against the blows of the real world, both internal and external. The Christian, lovingly, must remove the shelter and allow the truth of the external world and *what man is* to beat upon him.[85]

When the roof is off, each man must stand naked and wounded before the truth of what is. This is what shows him his need and then the Scriptures can show him the real nature of his lostness and the answer.

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[80]Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 9.

[81]Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 59-60. We are called to bring our faith into the public arena, to publish it, to put it to risk in the encounter with other faiths and ideologies in open debate and argument.

[82]Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 107.

[83]Schaeffer, *How Should?* 83.

[84]Schaeffer, *God Who Is There*, 132-133.

[85]Schaeffer, *God Who Is There*, 140.

He must realize that his system of presuppositions has no answer to the crucial questions of life. He must come to know that his roof is false protection against the storm of what is; then we can talk of the storm of the judgment of God.[86]

When modern man feels dead, he is experiencing what the word of God tells him he is. He is not able to define his deadness or how to solve it, but he knows he is dead. We are to tell him that his death is a moral and spiritual death and of God's remedy.[87]

An invitation to dogma

In the Christian era, "dogma" was a good word. It stood for the blessed gift of certainty and of an assured truth. "Doubt," on the other hand, stood for something evil and harmful. The Enlightenment reversed the roles of the two words. "Doubt" was elevated to a position of honor as the first principle of knowledge. The readiness to question all accepted opinions was the prime condition for arriving at the truth. "Dogma," on the other hand, became a bad word, standing for all that shackles the free exercise of human reason.

Yet, doubt does not come out of a vacant mind for "when we undertake to doubt any statement, we do so on the basis of beliefs — in the act of doubting, we do not doubt."[88] In other words, one can only doubt the truth of a statement on the grounds of other things which one believes to be true.[89] Consequently, one must now recognize belief once more as the source of all knowledge.

Therefore the church, founded and based on the foundational tenets of faith and Scripture alone, invites the modern and postmodern man to recover a proper acknowledgment of the role of dogma. It is an invitation to the church to be bold in offering to

> men and women of our culture a way of understanding which makes no claim to be demonstrable in the terms of "modern"

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[86]Schaeffer, *God Who Is There*, 140-141.

[87]Schaeffer, *God Who Is There*, 142.

[88]Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 19.

[89]Newbigin, *Truth to Tell*, 29: "You cannot criticize a statement of what claims to be the truth except on the basis of some other truth-claims which you accept without criticism."

thought, which is not "scientific" in the popular sense of that word, which is based unashamedly on the revelation of God made in Jesus Christ and attested in Scripture and the tradition of the Church, and which is offered as a fresh starting point for the exploration of the mystery of human existence and for coping with its practical tasks not only in the private and domestic life of the believers but also in the public life of the citizen.[90]

A solid epistemology based upon antithesis

According to Hegelian dialectic, the universe is steadily unfolding and so is man's understanding of it with no single proposition about reality reflecting what is true. Instead of thesis and antithesis, truth and moral righteousness will be found in the flow of history, a synthesis of them. Today, not only in philosophy, but in politics, government, and individual morality, our generation sees solutions in terms of synthesis and not absolutes.[91]

Rational thought as antithesis, however, is rooted in reality because antithesis fits the reality of His existence and the reality of His creation. Moreover, God made our minds to think in the category of antithesis. Therefore, historic Christianity has always stood on the basis of thesis and antithesis and it must cling to the methodology of antithesis—if one thing is true, the opposite is not true; if a thing is right, the opposite is wrong.[92]

Morality is based upon God's character and will

Modern man, in the absence of absolutes, has made moral standards completely hedonistic and relativistic.[93] As a result, every situation is judged subjectively with no absolute to which to appeal. Yet, there must be an absolute if there is to be morals and values for one can never have real values without absolutes.[94]

Moral absolutes rest upon God's transcendent law which are a concrete expression of His character and will. In verbalized, prepositional form, God has spoken and told us what His character is and His character is the

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[90]Lesslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986), 27.
[91]Schaeffer, *How Should?* 179.
[92]Schaeffer, *God Who Is There*, 184, 47.
[93]Schaeffer, *No Little People*, 55.
[94]Schaeffer, *Pollution*, 15-16.

opposite of what is relativistic, for He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.[95]

Missioning as bridge-building

John Stott, in *Between Two Worlds*, defines the proclamatory and missionary endeavors of the church through the metaphor of bridge-building: "Now a bridge is a means of communication between two places which would otherwise be cut off from one another by a river or a ravine. It makes possible a flow of traffic which without it would be impossible."[96]

The modern church follows in a long succession of bridge-builders. Throughout the history of the church, Christians have tried to relate the biblical message to their particular cultures.[97] In the construction of these missiological bridges God's people, as instruments of *Missio Dei*, have been called and enlightened by the Holy Spirit to relate God's unchanging word to our ever changing world.

The missionary task is faithfully to translate the word of God into modern language and thought categories and to make it present in our day. This kind of bridge building and missionary encounter is possible since "the One we preach is not Christ-in-a-vacuum, nor a mystical Christ unrelated to the real world, nor even only the Jesus of ancient history, but rather the contemporary Christ who once lived and died, and now lives to meet human need in all its variety today."[98]

And yet, if we are to build bridges into the real world, and seek to relate the word of God to the major themes of life and the major themes of the day, then "we have to take seriously both the biblical text and the contemporary scene...only then shall we discern the connections between them and be able to speak the divine Word to the human situation with any degree of sensitivity and accuracy."[99]

Stott's model presents a powerful summary of what would be involved in an evangelical encounter between the word of God and modern,

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[95]Schaeffer, *God Who Is There*, 303.
[96]Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 137-138.
[97]Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 139.
[98]Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 149, 154.
[99]Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 180.

Western culture. In order to accomplish this, it demands that God's people commit themselves to a lifetime of studying God's word; studying one's target culture; and discerning and constructing missiological bridges that communicate the apostolic message into the hearts and minds of the receptor because "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

Because of the Fall, man has experienced four major separations: (1) separation from God; (2) separation from self; (3) separation from others; and (4) separation from nature. On the basis of the work of Christ, Christianity "has in it the possibility of substantial healings now in every area where there are divisions because of the Fall."[100] The Christian community should be a living exhibition of substantial healings and a witness to a fragmented world.

In other words, the church ought to be a *pilot plant* where mankind can see in our congregations and missions a substantial healing of all the divisions, the alienations which man's rebellion has produced. Indeed, believes Schaeffer, "unless something like this happens, I do not believe the world will listen to what we have to say."[101]

The concept of cultural framing

There is one missiological concept which has enormous significance for the evangelistic outreach of God's people—the concept of cultural framing. According to Paul Hiebert, a cultural frame is a social setting that has its own subculture. In simple tribal societies the number of cultural frames is few and the differences between them minimal. In modern cities, on the other hand, there are many frames, and the differences between them are great.

God's people in the modern and postmodern world, both ordained pastors and consecrated laity, walk in many different cultural frames.[102]

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[100]Schaeffer, *Pollution*, 39: "First of all, my division from God is healed by justification, but then there must be the 'existential reality' of this moment by moment. Second, there is the psychological division from himself. Third, the sociological divisions of man from other men. And last, the division of man from nature, and nature from nature."

[101]Schaeffer, *Pollution*, 47-48.

[102]Guinness, *Gravedigger Files*, 80: "Worlds which are only minutes apart physically may be light years apart morally or spiritually. A person's life can therefore come to

Missiologically speaking, how can the body of Christ become engaged in mutually equipping every member in the missionary method of culture learning so that they can discern the contours of the cultural context and communicate a biblical message within its context. Stated in a different way, cultural framing can permit the believer to understand the "atmospheric condition" of the context. Once the context has been understood and evaluated, cultural framing permits a more conscious and intentional communication of the Christian message, by the Christian believer, in that context.

Moreover, it would seem that the chief categories of worldview (ultimate and external reality, history, man, truth, ethics) would be a manageable framework in which to know the Christian faith and from which to analyze the contexts in which we walk. Once the Christian believer has discerned the "ground" of the mission context, he or she can winsomely and evangelically communicate the biblical texts to the context through confessional, hermeneutical, and law-gospel understandings and applications.

Epilogue

Peter Berger, in *Against the World For the World*, observed that in the sociocultural context of America "there has taken place a widespread loss of transcendence and in which there have been far-reaching accommodations by Christians to this loss." As a result he, along with several of his colleagues at Hartford Seminary, called for "a return to transcendence and for a less accommodating stance by Christians in the contemporary scene."[103]

In closing, missiologists speak of the importance of revitalization in a culture that is experiencing demoralization due to acculturation. In order for a revitalization movement to occur, often it requires that a reformation or innovation take place so that a new steady state might be achieved. It is my hope that God's people of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod might experience such a reformation by the power of His Spirit and boldly fulfill its mission in this modern and postmodern age.

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resemble a non-stop process of commuting between almost completely separate, even segregated, worlds."

[103]Berger, *Against the World*, 8-9.

May we be good soldiers, then, not flinching at the point of battle but lovingly, joyfully, and evangelically being engaged in scattering the seed of His word realizing that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

May we be good communicators, always being grounded in the word of God and seeking to construct relevant and meaningful bridges into the hearts and minds of the regenerate and the lost.

May we construct, by the Spirit's power and activity, caring Christian communities where people are drawn to Jesus Christ as their Savior, nurtured in the Christian faith through the apostles' teaching, fellowship, prayer, and equipped for works of Christian service on the mission frontier.

May we, as did Luther, always realize that the sovereign Lord is working in His world according to His timing. As modern men and women struggle *coram Deo*, may we be sensitive to the Lord's working like Philip was with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39) so that a timely interpretation of life might be shared which permits the receptor to "make sense" of his relationship to God and to humankind.

Finally, may we be bearers of Good News to an age that has experienced the loss of certainty, comprehensiveness, and compelling power. May the Lord bless us in this task of laying solid Christological foundations and building relevant, missiological bridges into this fragmented world. May the false believer find salvation and meaning in Him alone.

Book Reviews

Perspectives on Religion and American Culture. **Edited by Peter W. Williams. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999. xii+418 pages. Paper. $29.95.**

Editor Peter W. Williams, of Miami University (Ohio), has compiled a very helpful collection of articles by a distinguished group of scholars, as well as including strong representation from those making significant new contributions to the study of religion in America. Williams assembles articles that treat both historical and contemporary issues. However, the pieces are not arranged chronologically, but thematically. Stephen Stein ("Religious Innovations at the Edges"), William R. Hutchison ("Diversity and the Pluralist Ideal"), and Charles Lippy ("Pluralism and American Religious Life in the Later Twentieth Century") are all distinguished contributors to the section on diversity and pluralism.

As the title indicates, Williams pays particular attention to the interaction of religion and culture in the American setting in three sections titled the "Religious Roots of American Culture," "Religious Cultures in Transition," and "Popular and Material Culture." In this last section Jeanne Halgren Kilde's "Architecture and Urban Revivalism in Nineteenth-century America" shines. Kilde notes that "the religious revivals of the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries owed much of their success to the powerful, emotion-packed, mostly extemporaneous preaching of extraordinary speakers." However, over time the architecture of the traditional churches Aundermined revivalists' attempts to heighten the immediacy and emotional impact of their preaching" (175). The solution? Adopt the form of the theater or auditorium. The application to the contemporary megachurch is obvious, as Kilde rightly notes: "Although most religious practices-including the investment of special status in a priestly or clerical class, liturgies and other rituals, and preaching-have always addressed the needs of the laity to some extent, the development and use of the amphitheater space in the nineteenth century represents a dramatic change, both in the religious needs being met and the means developed to meet them. Physical, not spiritual, needs attained great influence during the 1830s revival period and perhaps predominance by the late nineteenth century. Surely in the late twentieth century, physical and psychic comfort guide the megachurches' success" (185). Apparently there is a relationship between style and substance!

Other sections treat race and ethnicity, gender and family issues, and, finally, intellectual and literary culture. Most contributions feature a brief, but helpful, bibliography for those interested in pursuing a particular topic.

Perspectives on American Religion and Culture is a fine collection of articles treating the history of religion in American and its place in the formation and ongoing development of culture. To that end, it is an excellent contribution to the history of American Christianity.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

Lutheran Catechesis-Catechumen Edition: A Guide to Catechesis for the Lutheran Catechumen and Family. **By Peter C. Bender. Sussex, Wisconsin: Concordia Catechetical Academy, 1999. 279 Pages.**

Wilhelm Löhe warned against the tendency to interject another book between the *Small Catechism* and the catechumen. In the last century, dozens of manuals, workbooks, and explanations of the *Small Catechism* have been published, often obscuring the simplicity of the catechism, sometimes contradicting Luther's intention for its use or clouding the clarity of the text with complex dogmatic expositions or psychological applications. *Lutheran Catechesis* is not just another manual to be used along side of or in place of the catechism. Rather *Lutheran Catechesis* is transparent to the structure and theology of the catechism that it seeks to serve.

The author of *Lutheran Catechesis* is a seasoned pastor/catechist whose daily life and work breathes with the spirit of Luther's catechism. Now he has given the church a gift that is harvested from scholarly study and the ongoing pastoral work of teaching children and adults the chief articles of the Christian faith. Pastor Peter Bender provides us with a model for catechesis drawn from three books: the Holy Scriptures, the *Small Catechism,* and the hymnal. Doctrine is drawn from the Scriptures, confessed in the *Small Catechism,* and expressed doxologically in the hymnal. All three books are essential for *Lutheran Catechesis*. This is expressed in each of the twenty-four lessons as each unit is divided into three parts: (1) The Word of Faith; (2) The Catechism in Detail; (3) A Look at the Divine Liturgy.

Lutheran Catechesis faithfully follows Luther's own ground plan, laid out in the Preface to the *Small Catechism,* for teaching the Catechism as Bender begins with teaching the text (learning the Catechism "by heart"), moves on to "teaching what the words mean," and culminates in taking up the *Large Catechism* to "impart to them a richer and fuller understanding." In good Lutheran fashion, Bender sees catechesis as geared toward repentance, faith, and holy living. Therefore catechesis is not to be equated with education but with shaping the life of one who lives by dying. Such catechesis is not limited to "confirmation instruction" but embraces the whole life of the believer from font to grave. One of the many side benefits for the pastor using *Lutheran Catechesis* is the insightful commentary for the preaching of repentance and faith found in Bender's exposition of AThe Word of Faith." Rather than using multiple "proof texts" Bender aptly uses larger biblical narratives to demonstrate how the truth of each article of faith in relationship to th"chief article" of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Each unit contains additional biblical texts for meditation and study.

Like the *Small Catechism* itself, *Lutheran Catechesis* circles back to build on and expand themes covered in earlier lessons. Bender rightly recognizes that the *Small Catechism* is actually a prayer book and so provides tips drawn from

Luther's letter to his barber for how to pray the Catechism. The volume concludes with a concise, but complete, glossary of "catechism terms."

Lutheran Catechesis has much promise both for the pastor as well as "the head of the household" that Luther envisioned as the primary catechist. *Lutheran Catechesis* offers a comprehensive approach to the use of the Catechism in the congregation, school, and home. In addition to the catechumen's edition, a catechist edition is available. It contains additional material for the catechesis of the Old and New Testaments (Bible history), examinations, reproducible certificates, a graded approach for the teaching of hymns and learning the parts of the Catechism by heart, and other teaching helps. Both the catechumen and the catechist edition may be purchased from the Concordia Catechetical Academy, PO Box 123, Sussex, Wisconsin 53089.

John T. Pless

The Sacred Gift of Life: Orthodox Christianity and Bioethics. **By John Breck. Crestwood, New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998. Paper. 288 Pages.**

John Breck, formerly professor of New Testament and Ethics at Saint Vladimir's Seminary, brings his considerable knowledge of the Scriptures and of patristic writers to address bioethical topics of current issue. After giving a concise and helpful overview of how Orthodox theologians approach the task of *theological* ethics from the perspective of human life as a sacred gift, Breck goes on to address typical themes raised by contemporary ethical discourse: the distinction between "personhood" and the "individual," sanctity of life versus quality of life, and freedom and responsibility. Breck outlines a trinitarian approach to ethics that is grounded in the self-giving love of God. He skillfully shows how the eastern understanding of original sin, revelation, incarnation, and church shapes ethical reflection in this tradition in ways that are fundamentally divergent from the path taken by western Christendom.

The bulk of the volume is devoted to ethical issues related to sexuality, marriage, procreation, and the sacredness of life both at its beginning and its end. For the most part, Breck engages himself in conversation with other Orthodox theologians. He does demonstrate an awareness of contemporary Christian ethicists from the Roman Catholic Church (especially Thomas Shannon, Allan Wolter, and Richard McCormick as they attempt to defend the "pre-embryo" as "pre-human," a concept that Breck denies) and the Lutheran ethicist Gilbert Meilaender (quoted approvingly for the most part). Generally, Breck's conclusions come as no surprise. From his understanding of marriage as the embodiment of "covenant responsibility," he sees some freedom for the use of contraceptives but views abortion as murder. He denounces Oregon's Measure 16 and similar proposals that give legal standing to assisted suicide. He provides a forceful argument against the use of fetal tissue and cloning from the basis of the Apostle's assertion that we may not do evil that good may

come (Romans 3:8). However, when it comes to the case of a woman who has been severely traumatized by rape, Breck cautiously concedes that abortion "may be the lesser of two evils" (261).

Lutheran readers will note that Breck's anthropological stance rules out *simul iustus et peccator* as a meaningful construct for theological ethics (34-38). Although he uses different terminology, Breck's ethical reflections do show an understanding that human life is lived *coram Deo* and is brought under judgment by the First Commandment. Thus the starting point for bioethics is not man's morality but God Himself. Breck is careful to explain medical terminology and technical procedures. His writing is punctuated with references to the life of liturgy and prayer, often pointing out how the liturgy itself gives direction to the contours for ethical thought and action. Implications for pastoral and diaconal care are woven into the fabric of the discussion. *The Sacred Gift of Life: Orthodox Christianity and Bioethics* is a rich and thoughtful exposition of Orthodox ethics applied to a culture that defines itself in terms of autonomy. There is much in this book that the Lutheran pastor will find genuinely helpful both in terms of ethics and pastoral care.

John T. Pless

Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman. Anchor Bible 24E. New York: Doubleday, 2000. 637 Pages. $42.50.

This volume marks the third collaboration between Francis Andersen and David Noel Freedman in the Anchor Bible series, and it may well be the best they have yet produced. (The other volumes are Hosea [24] and Amos [24A].) Andersen and Freedman profess to be "primarily interested in the Hebrew version of Micah, the complete text of which is available now only in the Masoretic recension," which they include for each pericope in transliteration and translation (5).

A translation of the Greek text of Micah is provided. After treating the text and ancient translations of Micah, Andersen and Freedman divide the book into three major literary sections: The Book of Doom (1:2-3:12); The Book of Visions (4:1-5:14); and The Book of Contention and Conciliation (6:1-7:20).

The authors also include a survey of critical scholarship on Micah. They offer a negative critique of form and redaction critical approaches that tend to find a multiplicity of sources from perceived authors or redactors. In contrast, Andersen and Freedman favor the literary approaches that have become popular in the last twenty years. Such approaches view the text as a coherent whole instead of atomizing the text.

The commentary portion of this book is a literary analysis of the book. It contains many defenses of the integrity of the Mazoretic Text of Micah that find their support in Andersen and Freedman's careful literary analysis of the

text. Repeatedly they reject the emendations of earlier critical scholars who sought to make the text conform to their own ideas of what they believed the text ought to have been. The one weakness in Andersen and Freedman's approach is that they at times claim to observe literary patterns in the text that are difficult or impossible to defend. For instance, Micah 4-5 is claimed to be a coherent section based on the use of the word *'attâ* (392-393). Unfortunately, *'attâ* is not used prominently enough in these chapters to make a strong argument that Micah intended it to be an organizing principle. Andersen and Freedman seem to sense this weakness because their discussion is far too concerned with explaining why *'attâ* is an organizing principle despite its less-than-prominent use in these chapters.

This flaw aside, we can rejoice that at least one wing of critical scholarship is defending the MT text as it stands without resorting to the destructive cut-and-paste methods of earlier generations. Yet, we should not mistake this commentary as completely friendly to the confessional Lutheran understanding of Scripture and its purpose. It does not mount a defense of the book as actually originating with a historical Micah of Moresheth, does not seek to bring to the fore the beautiful gospel which points to Christ throughout the book, nor does it understand the law and gospel dynamic that is essential for correctly grappling with the issues the prophet addresses. Moreover, it does not offer many insights into the meaning of the text that will be useful for preparing a sermon or Bible class on Micah. This is probably due to the minimal theological interests of the authors (an unfortunate consequence of mildly higher-critical scholarship that has reacted to the more strident critical scholarship that seeks to inject into the text whatever human-based theology is popular at the moment). Andersen and Freedman wrote for an academic audience that is interested in questions of text and literary analysis. We can be grateful for their conservative approach to the text, even though we find little theological analysis in their commentary.

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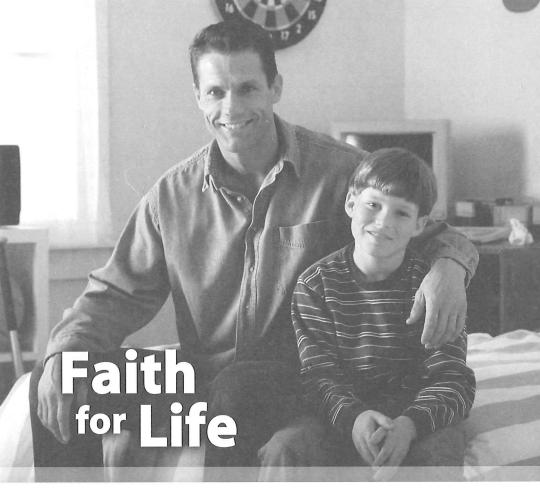
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