

Concordia Theological Quarterly

Volume 73 Number 4
October 2009

C
T
Q

Agreement and Disagreement about Justification:
Ten Years after the *Joint Declaration on the
Doctrine of Justification*

Reinhard Slenczka

The *Consensus of Sandomierz*: An Early Attempt
to Create a Unified Protestant Church in 16th
Century Poland and Lithuania

Darius Petkunas

Relating to Other Christians Charitably and
Confessionally

Samuel H. Nafzger

Concordia Theological Quarterly

Concordia Theological Quarterly, a continuation of *The Springfielder*, is a theological journal of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, published for its ministerium by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Editor: David P. Scaer

Associate Editor: Charles A. Gieschen

Book Review Editor: Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

Members of the Editorial Committee

Adam S. Francisco, Richard T. Nuffer, Timothy C. J. Quill, and Dean O. Wenthe

Editorial Assistant: Matthew G Rasmussen *Administrative Assistant:* Annette Gard

The Faculty

James G. Bushur	Walter A. Maier III	Douglas L. Rutt
Carl C. Fickenscher II	Naomichi Masaki	David P. Scaer
Adam S. Francisco	John G. Nordling	Peter J. Scaer
Daniel L. Gard	Richard T. Nuffer	Randall A. Schroeder
Charles A. Gieschen	John T. Pless	Klaus Detlev Schulz
Paul J. Grime	Jeffrey H. Pulse	William C. Weinrich
Larry S. Harvala	Timothy C. J. Quill	Dean O. Wenthe
Arthur A. Just Jr.	Lawrence R. Rast Jr.	Roland F. Ziegler
Cameron A. MacKenzie	Richard C. Resch	
Walter A. Maier	Robert V. Roethemeyer	

Concordia Theological Quarterly (CTQ) is indexed in *Religion Index One: Periodicals* and abstracted in *Old Testament Abstracts* and *New Testament Abstracts*. CTQ is also indexed by the *ATLA Religion Database®* (published by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606; www.atla.com) and the *International Bibliography of Periodical Literature on the Humanities and Social Sciences* (www.gbv.de).

Manuscripts submitted for publication should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style* and are subject to peer review and editorial modification. Please visit our website at www.ctsfw.edu/ctq for more information. Previous Articles, Theological Observers, and Book Reviews can be accessed electronically at www.ctsfw.edu/library/probono.php.

CTQ is published in January, April, July, and October. The annual subscription rate is \$20.00 within the United States, \$25.00 (U.S.) in Canada, and \$40.00 (U.S.) elsewhere. All changes of address, subscription payments, and other correspondence should be e-mailed to annette.gard@ctsfw.edu or sent to *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 6600 North Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825. CTQ is printed and shipped by Mignone Communications, Inc., Huntington, Indiana.

Concordia Theological Quarterly



Volume 73:4

October 2009

Table of Contents

Editorial	290
<i>Agreement and Disagreement about Justification: Ten Years after the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification</i>	
Reinhard Slenczka	291
<i>The Consensus of Sandomierz: An Early Attempt to Create a Unified Protestant Church in 16th Century Poland and Lithuania</i>	
Darius Petkunas.....	317
<i>Relating to Other Christians Charitably and Confessionally</i>	
Samuel H. Nafzger	347
<i>Theological Observer</i>	364
How Did We Come to This?	
The Lutheran Church in Lithuania Today	
365 Days with Calvin	
Book Reviews	374
Indices for Volume 73 (2009)	382

Seeking Unity among Christians and Christian Churches

One decade ago the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ) was hailed as the document resolving a doctrinal dispute between the Lutherans and Roman Catholics that had simmered since the Reformation. CTQ published a response to JDDJ (see CTQ 62 [April 1998]: 83-106) and a related article (see Gottfried Martins, "Agreement and Disagreement on Justification by Faith Alone," CTQ 65 [July 2001]: 195-223). Reinhard Slenczka offers a retrospect on how Roman Catholic doctrinal practice reveals that JDDJ has not brought about the unity on justification that it trumpeted.

Darius Petkunas relates how the Roman Catholic king of Poland required his Lutheran, Reformed, and Bohemian Brethren subjects to form one administrative unit in the Reformation era, and the result was the *Consensus of Sandomierz* in 1570. The Reformed used it as a confession to establish fellowship. In the decades that followed, the Lutherans extradited themselves from this arrangement and committed themselves to the Augsburg Confession. An earlier generation of Lutheran pastors was introduced to the *Consensus of Sandomierz* through a short article by Jaroslav Pelikan that appeared in *Concordia Theological Monthly* 18:11 (November 1947): 825-837. Pelikan cited the *Consensus* as an example of how Reformation-era Lutherans and Reformed shared fellowship. Petkunas takes exception to this view and argues that the Lutherans did not see it a confessional document.

Samuel Nafzger draws on his decades of experience in church relations on behalf of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to write about how Christians can and should relate with one another. Originally an address to students on this campus, it is now offered to our readers.

The Theological Observer section includes Robert Benne's reflections on the tragic convention actions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) this past August. Darius Petkunas gives our readers insight into the current situation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania.

As we draw closer to celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in the year 2017, undoubtedly many questions will be raised about Christian unity by both church leaders and people in the pews. This issue should be of help in addressing such questions.

The Editors

Agreement and Disagreement about Justification: Ten Years after the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*¹

Reinhard Slenczka

I. Did Agreement about Justification Exist on October 31, 1999?

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) is the last in a long series of negotiations and agreements on justification between Roman Catholics and Lutherans in Europe and the USA.² Earlier documents were often hailed as progress on the way to visible unity among churches separated since the Reformation, but they were often met with strong criticism from theologians and church authorities on both sides. This is true also for *JDDJ*. Already before the signing of *JDDJ*, 158 German theologians in 1998 and again 243 in 1999 objected to its contents and warned against signing it.³ German church officials reacted with contempt and mockery. A long line of private and public correspondence followed in newspapers and theological journals.

JDDJ was signed by both sides on Reformation Day 1999 in Augsburg but with certain additions and amendments. The first addition was an

¹ The Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church, "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html [Henceforth *JDDJ*].

² The most prominent are mentioned in *JDDJ*, 3. For a collection of these documents see, Harding Meyer, Günther Gassmann, Hrsg., *Rechtfertigung im ökumenischen Dialog. Dokumente und Einführung*, Ökumenische Perspektiven 12 (Frankfurt: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 1987). I was a member of "The Condemnations of the Reformation Era – Do They Still Divide?" from the Ecumenical Working Group of Protestant and Catholic Theologians in Germany (1986). Because of principle divergences, I had to withhold my signature under the final document. The best and most in depth research on the contents and the result of the theological conversations about justification before 1999 is offered in the dissertation of my doctoral student Gottfried Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders: Rettungshandeln Gottes oder historisches Interpretament*, FSÖTh 64 (Göttingen: Josef Knecht, 1992).

³ Epd-Dokumentation (Evangelischer Pressdienst Frankfurt / M.) Nr. 7, 1998 and 45, 1999.

Reinhard Slenczka is professor emeritus of systematic theology at the University of Erlangen. He previously taught at the theological faculties in Berne (Switzerland) and Heidelberg (Germany). Most recently he served as Rector of Luther Academy in Riga, Latvia (1997-2005).

"Annex to the Official Common Statement," containing a series of so-called "elucidations" that took up the remaining differences, but this did not prevent reaching consensus "regarding basic truths of justification." The second was an "Official Common Statement by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church" in which the main point was: "The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this Declaration shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics."⁴ On the basis of this consensus, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Catholic Church declare together: "The teaching of the Lutheran Church presented in the Declaration does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in the Declaration."⁵ The condemnations were removed not because they were entirely wrong in themselves, but because they no longer applied due to changes and developments in doctrine and practice that had occurred on both sides.

It did not take long for the problems with JDDJ to surface. Unity in doctrine confessed by the theologians did not play out in church practice. For example, the year 2000 was proclaimed, as is done every 50 years, a Holy Year (*Annus Sanctus*) in which one could get special jubilee indulgences in Roman congregations. Shortly thereafter, German Bishop Krause, the LWF president, went on pilgrimage to meet Pope John Paul II in Rome. Upon his return, he noted hesitantly that indulgences might be one problem JDDJ did not address.⁶

Again, in the year 2000 the Congregation for Faith (*Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*), led by the then Cardinal Josef Ratzinger and now Pope Benedict XVI, published the *Declaration Dominus Iesus about the uniqueness and salvation universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*,⁷ which stated that the Church of Rome was the only one true and perfect church: "There is only one Church of Christ which subsists in the catholic church and is led by the

⁴ JDDJ, 40.

⁵ JDDJ, 41.

⁶ Only recently the theme of indulgences was taken up by Bishop Weber from Braunschweig, being the representative of the conference of bishops of the United Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) for the dialogue with Roman Catholics—a rather belated insight.

⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration 'Dominus Iesus' on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html, 17 [Henceforth DJ].

successor of Peter and the bishops being in communion with him."⁸ Churches which retained apostolic succession and therefore a valid Eucharist are "particular churches" even if communion with the Bishop of Rome is missing.⁹ It also states that "ecclesial communions not retaining the valid episcopacy and the original and perfect reality of the Eucharistic mystery are not churches in the full sense."¹⁰ The reason for the deficiency of order is matrimony and lack of submission under the Bishop of Rome. This declaration was explicitly approved by Pope John Paul II in the apostolic authority of his office (*magisterium*).

These two examples remind us that the decisive point is not doctrine in an abstract and theoretical way, leading back to condemnations from former times, but the church in her living practice in our times. Teaching is not just theory contrived by professors of theology, but it is about what the church does in following her Lord and Savior. One of the reasons that agreement in doctrinal practice between Lutherans and Roman Catholics has not blossomed in the past decade since the JDDJ is because Lutherans do not even agree among themselves on justification.

II. The Lack of Agreement among Members of the Lutheran World Federation¹¹

As we look at the attempts to reach an agreement on justification between Lutherans and the Roman Catholic Church, we inevitably have to ask ourselves whether there is agreement among Lutherans and other churches stemming from the Reformation (as the *Leuenberg Concord* of European Churches declared in 1973). This is the main problem in inter-church dialogues. This is not only a question about theological directions and parties, but about the knowledge and the acknowledgment of foundations in Scripture and confession. Today it seems easier to mark theological directions and parties by following the parliamentary system of right and left, of progressive and conservative, and we discern this according to majority and minority of adherents. But how are we to distinguish true and false teaching, true and false church? According to 1 Corinthians 12:10 "the discretion of the spirits" (*dia,krisij pneuma, twn*) is a gift of the Holy Spirit active in the church. Why are we

⁸ DJ, 17.

⁹ DJ, 17.

¹⁰ DJ, 17.

¹¹ Reinhard Slenczka, "Gerecht vor Gott durch den Glauben an Jesus Christus: Das Verständnis der Rechtfertigung in der evangelischen Kirche und die Verständigung über die Rechtfertigung mit der römisch-katholischen Kirche," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 29 (1987): 295-316.

using parliamentary procedures instead of the discretion of the spirits in such doctrinal decisions?

In spite of this bad habit or even laziness in making theological judgment and doctrinal decisions, we have the deplorable but significant event of the fourth Plenary Assembly of the LWF under the main theme "Christ Today" in Helsinki in 1963.¹² It failed to endorse the prepared document "Justification Today" because they could not reach an agreement. Imagine what this means for Lutherans: No consensus about justification! Somehow this is a contradiction in itself, but it is an unquestionable fact and a healthy lesson for Lutheran theologians who think that agreement with Roman Catholic theologians could be reached on a subject upon which even Lutheran theologians could not agree.

After the Helsinki LWF plenary assembly failed to issue the planned declaration, a commission of theologians was appointed to prepare a document for further discussion. But this document was, as the commission said in its foreword, not to serve as an agreement but as an impulse for further discussion. In a way, it was like Adam and Eve after the fall: "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons" (Gen 3:7). Looking back, we may even ask how any dialogue about justification could take place with other churches when Lutherans could not agree among themselves. This document may serve as a teaching example not only for the doctrine of justification but also for theology in general. So let us briefly examine two problems that came to the surface in Helsinki.

The first point of departure is the small word "today": "justification today" or "Christ today." From the outside, the word "today" can be called an axiom or an assertion, because people using this language are convinced that contradiction is not possible. But how do you reach such an assertion—by polls or convincing statistics? As for this ominous "today," we should ponder Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Christ is the Lord over space and time as he promises to his disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:18–20). Doctrine is not

¹² *Offizieller Bericht der vierten Vollversammlung des Lutherischen Weltbundes Helsinki 30. Juli – 11. August 1963. Berlin – Hamburg 1965.*

about constantly changing opinions or theologies as imaginations of theologians, but it is about Christ himself: the incarnate, crucified, and risen Lord whom we expect to come back in his visible heavenly glory at the end of this world and time. In terms of grammar: Christ is a living person; he is an acting and present subject. Even as he does not change, his teaching is not one thing today and another tomorrow.

Second, the post-Helsinki document¹³ starts by changing the questions: "The witness of the Reformation about justification by faith alone started from the existential question: How do I get a gracious God? In the world we are living in today this question is almost silenced. Instead there is the question: 'How does my life get meaning or sense?'"¹⁴ The document goes on to say: modern man "doesn't recognize that it is God speaking to us. The question whether God is and in what way man is God's creature has become a question."¹⁵ After Helsinki some bluntly said: "Luther asked for the gracious God; modern man asks for the gracious neighbor."

Behind this approach was Paul Tillich's (1886-1965) theology of correlation which asserts that the task of theology is to answer the questions received by philosophy as representing modern thinking. This method is deeply-rooted and widespread in theology and the church. In this concept of theology, there is nothing about truth and conversion, Scripture and confession, but there is assent and convergence with public opinion.

Luther's question should remain central in modern dialogues on justification. Hear what he told his congregation in a sermon about Jesus' baptism (Matt 3:13-17) and his quest for the gracious God:

I was tortured by the question "when will you be really pious and satisfy in order to get a gracious God? This kind of thoughts led me to be a monk and to torture myself by fasting, freezing and all kinds of ascetic life. But that way I did not reach any more than to lose the dear baptism, even to deny it." Therefore let us keep in mind, "that baptism is not our work and deed and keep in mind the big difference between God's and our works."¹⁶

Here you have it quite clearly. The reason for understanding or not

¹³ *Rechtfertigung heute: Studien und Berichte*, Hgg. von der Theologischen Kommission des Lutherischen Weltbundes (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1965).

¹⁴ *Rechtfertigung heute*, 7.

¹⁵ *Rechtfertigung heute*, 8.

¹⁶ Martin Luther, *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe [Schriften]*, 65 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883-1993), 37: 661. 23 ff [Henceforth WA].

understanding justification is not the changing of questions in time or some historic development in doctrine. Instead, it is presenting our aspirations and imaginations to what God himself says and does for us in word and sacrament.

Agreement concerning justification among Lutherans in recent decades was doomed to failure because they started from experiences of the so-called modern man and not from what God accomplished in Jesus Christ and continues to accomplish through word and sacrament. Here is an exchange of subjects as modern man takes the place of Christ. The judgment of modern man is more feared than salvation from God's eternal judgment is believed.

III. Is "Doctrine" Interpretation or God's Action?

In the New Testament—as in also patristic, medieval, and Reformation theology—*dida,skein* means to teach and preach. Christ himself is teacher, preacher, judge, and savior. He is the *dida,skaloj* ("teacher") and his followers are *maqhtai*, ("disciples" or "pupils"). The teacher is not standing at a lecturn in a university auditorium, but his disciples follow him in the way that the whole person is moving and living in communion with the Lord. In the Augsburg Confession, "teaching" and "doctrine" refer to what is taught and preached in the congregations, first of all in worship. The *cathedra*, the chair, of the bishop belongs in the cathedral and teaching originates from the pulpit. It is a misconception in our times that most doctrine is found in the teaching of university professors and their publications rather than the church's worship and daily life.¹⁷

This is the reason why doctrine is understood as a historically ongoing and continuing *interpretation* of teaching especially in the documents on justification, decisions of church officials, and publications of theological professors. In this way the teaching office in the church is separated from worship in the congregation. Since I am a university professor of theology, I must say that in this perspective the authority of professors of theology functions like the papal teaching office. Therefore, in the documents on

¹⁷ An example for this understanding of doctrine and doctrinal development is found in F. D. Schleiermacher, *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums zum Behuf einleitender Vorlesungen* (Hildesheim, Germany: G. Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1961). In § 195 he defines dogmatic theology as "the knowledge about doctrine as it is at present acknowledged in the evangelical church" (*die zur gegebenen Zeit geltende Lehre*). According to § 196 this means "what is officially affirmed and received without official contradiction." Holy Scripture for Schleiermacher is first of all a historical document from old times, not the active word of God.

justification you will find nothing about worship and soul caring, whereas the Reformation confessed doctrine in this congregational context.

What this means can be seen in the following quotations from JDDJ:

5. The present Joint Declaration has this intention: namely, to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church are *now* able to articulate a *common understanding* of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ. It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a *consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification* and shows that the remaining *differences in its explication* are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations.

6. Our Declaration is not a new, independent presentation alongside the dialogue reports and documents to date, let alone a replacement of them. Rather, as the appendix of sources shows, it makes repeated reference to them and their arguments.

7. Like the dialogues themselves, this Joint Declaration rests on the *conviction* that in overcoming the earlier controversial questions and doctrinal condemnations, the churches neither take the condemnations lightly nor do they disavow their own past. On the contrary, this Declaration is shaped by the *conviction* that *in their respective histories our churches* have come to *new insights*. *Developments* have taken place which not only make possible, but also require the churches to examine the divisive questions and condemnations and see them in a *new light*.¹⁸

The decisive formulas for argumentation are highlighted. "Now" refers to time and situation. "Basic truths" and "remaining differences" imply the idea of doctrinal partitions, as if justification is composed out of separate bricks. They also speak about a "hierarchy of truths," as if there could be different degrees of truth.¹⁹ The only alternative to truth is error. "Conviction" (used twice) is an expression of subjectivity. "New insights" makes us ask ourselves what we did not see before. "Development" is a biological or technical term. Often it is applied to church history, as in this document where they speak about "histories of the churches." This means that something is growing in an organic way of progress. Interchurch dialogues often speak about growing consensus or convergence. "New light" presupposes darkness or refers to new revelation. All these arguments show a certain way of doing theology. It is not about right and wrong, about true and false doctrine, but rather about an ascending

¹⁸ JDDJ, 5-7 (Emphasis mine).

¹⁹ The plural "truths," in Latin: "*veritates*" comes from the Roman "*censura dogmatica*," an evaluation of teaching after certain sentences in Canon Law.

process from lower to higher steps or degrees, maybe even from separation to unity. This may be our human impression, but it is not how God relates to man through the word of God.

This can be seen also in how the word "doctrine" is used in consensus or convergence documents. Doctrine is understood as interpretations by theologians who follow the historical development of human thinking and social situation. From the Protestant perspective, doctrine is what professors of theology (especially in Germany) are teaching and writing. Consequently, doctrine, just as dogma, confession, and faith, is movable and changing in history. The history of theology or theologians is elevated to the level of the absolute norm of truth in the church within the framework of the history of human spirit (*Geistesgeschichte*) and society or even politics.

From the Roman Catholic perspective, doctrine is what is taught and determined by the *magisterium* of the church, pope, councils, and bishops. In this sense, "dogma" is generally understood as decision of either an ecclesial authority on the Roman side or of academic authorities on the Protestant side, presented for reception and assent by a majority of believers. Consequently, in ecumenical negotiations it is always asked if and how these documents will be received by the churches. In the Roman church, decisions about faith and life must be received by the church, and this then becomes necessary for salvation. Rejection means anathema (i.e., condemnation). This applies not only to the definition of papal infallibility in Vatican I (1870), but also to each canon in the decisions of the Council of Trent, which was about the Reformation controversy.

Usually Protestant participants in these theological conversations are not aware that Catholic definitions of faith are not merely interpretation but are necessary for salvation. Therefore, Protestants underestimate the character of such definitions. So they are surprised when representatives from the Roman church remind them—as they most certainly did—that there is no chance that the Council of Trent could be invalidated or changed. For Roman Catholics, they are not just interpretations, but they define what is necessary for salvation.

Not only in discussions about justification but in all theological conversations with other churches, Protestant theologians are fooling themselves in thinking that interpretation of doctrine will lead to agreement among divided churches. They seldom think about what is necessary for salvation. They only work agreement by majority vote of contemporary opinion, which is viewed as progress and truth. But can majority opinion be equated with the truth, especially in the church?

What, then, according to Scripture and Confession, is agreement? The Greek term for this is *koinwni*, a (Latin *communio*), which is gathering in the name of Christ as members and partakers of the body of Christ in worship (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4). According to the Augsburg Confession V and VII, word and sacrament are the instruments through which faith is given by the Holy Spirit where and when it pleases God. This, not human traditions and institutions, is the sole basis for unity in the Spirit. Spiritual unity is audible and visible, where and when the gospel is preached purely and the sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution. This takes place in worship.

IV. What is Justification?

In talking about the doctrine of justification (*Rechtfertigungslehre*), the impression is given that it is a uniquely Lutheran teaching or something peculiar to our confessions, connected with the name Luther and the movement of Luther. This perspective led to the LWF fiasco at Helsinki where the Lutherans could not agree. So what does justification mean exactly?

Justification, according to a classical definition in Latin, means: *iustificatio impii sola fide in Christo* ("justification of the sinner by faith alone in Christ"). It implies God's universal judgment over the living and the dead at the end of this world. God's law and commandments are the unchangeable criteria for this judgment. After the Fall, every human being is guilty before and exposed to God's judgment. Death is the empirical manifestation of punishment for the sin in Adam and Eve. Salvation from death and judgment is given only by faith alone in Jesus alone. This means that if we trust upon Jesus through baptism, we become united with what the Son of God has done and suffered for us in his death at the cross and resurrection from the dead.

Faith in Christ is union with Christ "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph 3:17). In Christ, and that is the communion of his body and by faith in him alone, we receive salvation from sin, the devil, and death, and satisfaction for what we have committed and omitted. In short, man—who is fallen under the power of sin, the devil, and death—is saved because the Son of God was sacrificed and died for us. United with him by faith in baptism, the image of God, that is the original righteousness and communion with God, is restored.

How does this happen? How do we participate in this? Justification—and this is seen from the Latin term—means that a sinner who is under the power of sin and devil and condemned to death is made just. This refers to judgment, to justice, and to the judge who is the Triune God himself.

The same applies to the Greek word *dikaiosis*, *nh* and the Hebrew *hqdc*. The problem, however, is that in church and theology we are afraid to speak of judgment in general and of God as the judge for all humanity. Yet we experience judgment in our consciences and hearts long before the last day. Romans 2 states how conscience or heart is universal in every human being. It is the place where God's unchangeable and universal law is active, and this points to the last judgment. Let us meditate on the whole text:

Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. You say, "We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth." Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. For he will repay according to each one's deeds: to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all." (Rom 2:1-16)

Here we see that justification is not just an isolated doctrine, but it encompasses the entire relationship between God and man. This includes God's law as the measure and criterion for his judgment, and man's conscience or heart as the place where law and judgment are active, and finally the gospel, bringing the good news: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (*euvagge,lion*) (Mark 1: 15). The justification of individual sinners is not a doctrine that evolves and develops with time, but it is the spiritual reality of Holy Baptism where God joins sinners to Christ and his

saving work. Justification determines whether a person is or is not a child of God. Through Baptism we are not just children of God according to a theological theory, but a spiritual reality: "That we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1). The audible sign of this childhood is that we address God with "Our Father," as the Son of God taught us, and the Spirit gives the liberty from sin (Matt 6:9; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5). Prayer in that way is not just an outward form but the manifestation of the Spirit.

To sum up, justification is not simply one doctrine among other individual theological formulations or inventions, but it is the Triune God acting in word and sacrament, bestowing in faith and baptism the communion with Christ which saves us from eternal judgment. Justification is no small matter; it is the basis and reality of the Christian Church and faith.

V. The Reformation Controversy about Indulgences

The Reformation was not, in Schleiermacher's words, "a natural explosion of the spirit of the time."²⁰ Neither was it an achievement of progress in academic theology, nor the step into modern thinking and times (*Neuzeit*). According to the Holy Scriptures, reformation is the divine process of God's grace acting in human minds:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed [suschmati, zesqe] to this world, but be transformed [metamorfou/sqe] by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:1-2)

The opposite of reformation is deformation by accommodation to the world. This is not only some event in past times of merely historical or academic relevance, but it is, or rather should be, the normal life of a Christian and the Christian church. Reformation happens under and through the word in law and gospel preaching, Baptism, Holy Supper, and Confession. The Reformation started from a struggle about *seelsorge* ("caring for the soul") and the practice of confession, penitence, and remission of sins. Most of Luther's first writings, beginning with the 95 Theses and followed by a series of sermons, were about *seelsorge* and the practice of confession. Current Roman Catholic practices regarding

²⁰ F. D. E. Schleiermacher, "Eine natürliche Explosion des Zeitgeistes," *Kleine Schriften II* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1846), 27.

confession continue to differ from Lutherans and reflect serious disagreement on justification.

In medieval times, church discipline was very strict. Because there was no separation of state from church, the church was in a way the backbone of the state. Sometimes bishops were given high political offices as they were highly esteemed and had the ability for this work. The church as an organization had an admirably effective and centralized organization, which was carried out especially by the different orders whose members traveled around preaching, hearing confessions, and raising funds. The immediate cause for the Reformation was the preaching about indulgences. This was the huge enterprise of collecting funds to pay the debts of some of the hierarchy who had to pay high sums for getting dispensation from the pope for irregular taking over of prebends (*Pfründe*) and the building of the enormous St. Peter's basilica in Rome.

The practice of confession and penitence was organized into details with voluminous books on confession and remission (*Bußbücher*) for all possible kinds of capital and occasional sins. Many priests were not very educated and therefore needed manuals to do this. These books give the impression that they were intended more for lawyers than for pastors caring for souls. Central was the detailed interrogation of consciences leading to continuous self-examination concerning the number of sins to be confessed followed by contrition and satisfaction for sins.²¹

Where did the reformers differ with Rome on confession? There was and is until today full agreement that sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit he committed to his disciples (John 20:22–23; Matt 16:19, 18:18). There also cannot be any controversy about contrition and confession, even though we ought to ask ourselves whether we teach and practice recognition of sin or whether sin for us is just a deficit in an otherwise healthy soul. The central issue of the Reformation controversy that continues even after *JDDJ* is the third point of penitence, that is, satisfaction for sins and the practice of indulgences in connection with penitence.

In opposition to the three steps of penitence for Catholics, Luther and the Augsburg Confession (CA XI and XII) said there are only two parts of

²¹ Before criticizing these procedures we should ask ourselves about confession and penitence in our congregations and personal life. Usually, I'm afraid to say, this is nothing more than some words at the beginning of worship—if only this is done. All other things related to heart and consciences are left for the psychotherapists, and they have a lot to do and are paid for this.

penitence, namely contrition as we recognize and feel sin in our heart or conscience and *fides*, faith that we believe and trust that our sins are forgiven because of Christ's suffering and death for the sin of the world. As for the third step, satisfaction, Luther says, the works are not the condition for making forgiveness effective, but they will be the fruit of the forgiveness of sin. Those works are not punishment imposed by the priest but signs of new life in faith (AC XII).

JDDJ never dealt with basic differences about what was meant by satisfaction, the third part of penitence, because the *doctrine* of justification was discussed apart from the *practice* of indulgences. The word *indulgentia* means, "forbearance, clemency, leniency, pity," (German: *Nachlass, Ablass*). This could be rendered also with terms used in business, "discount" or "sale." This means as a fixed price is lowered, things become cheaper. This makes clear that indulgences are connected with business.

As for the situation at the beginning of Reformation, we start from the first of Luther's 95 theses: "Our Lord and master Jesus Christ, as he says 'repent' . . . he wanted that the whole life of believers should be penitence." In the theses that follow, he points out that this penitence is not only restricted to the sacramental acts of penitence before a priest but comprises the whole life in faith. As a soul-carer, Luther had before him the consequences of the practice of satisfaction and indulgences that hearts and consciences are either hardened and become indifferent about sin or, on the other side, fall into despair and depression. This was Luther's own experience with his question for a propitious God. In the Smalcald Articles, he quotes a prayer of his time commonly used in worship after open confession: "Spare my life, Lord God, until I do penance and improve my life," and he continues: "Here there was no Christ. Nothing was mentioned about faith, but instead people hoped to overcome and blot out sin before God with their own works."²²

What is the state of indulgences today in the Roman church? Canons 992-997 from "*Codex Juris Canonici*," published after Vatican II in 1983, remain. The teaching and practice of indulgences are exactly the same as in the time of the Reformation. We will limit our comments to two canons.

Can. 992: An indulgence is the remission before God of temporal punishment for sins whose guilt is already forgiven, which a properly disposed member of the Christian faithful gains under certain and defined

²² Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, tr. Charles Arand, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), SA 3:13-14.

conditions by the assistance of the Church which as minister of redemption dispenses and applies authoritatively the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints.²³

The first decisive point is that an indulgence is not forgiveness of sins but remission from temporal punishment in this lifetime and afterwards in purgatory. This punishment results from sin and affects human wellbeing. Second, it is not done without adequate disposition. Third, the origin for indulgence is the "treasure of satisfactions of Christ and the Saints" (*Thesaurus satisfactionum Christi et Sanctorum*). The idea of satisfaction is found in the famous treaty of Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), "*Cur Deus Homo?*" – "*Why God became Man?*" Satisfaction, according to Anselm, is the payment to calm God's anger and restore his honor. This is a juridical procedure for recompensation and reparation; it is like a bank-account out of which funds are distributed.

Can. 994: Any member of the faithful can gain partial or plenary indulgences for oneself or apply them to the dead by way of suffrage.²⁴

The question in this canon is what Christians can do not only for themselves but also for their deceased loved one, or at least for the torture loved ones are suffering in purgatory, which is extensively depicted over the entrances of Gothic cathedrals and described in Dante's *Divina Commedia*. This can be an agonizing problem, and plays a significant role in soul-caring and liturgy, as in Masses for the deceased.

The other controversial point from Reformation times until today is: how are we able and allowed to apply salvation from punishment to the deceased? This also is discussed in Luther's 95 theses. He says that this idea was introduced when the bishops were asleep (Thesis 11), and those who are deceased by their death are free from canon law (Thesis 13). Moreover, Luther mentions a common saying: "As soon as the coin drops into the box, the soul will be lifted up from purgatory to heaven" (Thesis 27). Even though in Roman teaching there is a distinction between remission of sins and satisfactions (i.e., indulgences), in practice they appear as one thing. For example, a formula for the application of an indulgence to a dying person states: ". . . and I, by the power conferred to me by the Holy See, apply to you a plenary indulgence and forgiveness of

²³ Code of Canon Law, Canon 992, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/___P3I.HTM.

²⁴ Code of Canon Law, Canon 994, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/___P3I.HTM.

all sins."²⁵

Looking at these facts in church law, we must state quite clearly that indulgences, as they were practiced before the Reformation until today, are simply business and superstition, still sold and bought today. The reformers insisted, taught, and preached, that justification of the sinner and his salvation from God's judgment and punishment is accomplished by faith only (*sola fide*) in what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done for us and not by our satisfactions and payments. Here you see what the three "*sola*" of the Reformation are pointing to: *Sola Scriptura* – only what can be proved by Holy Scripture is to be obeyed and retained in church; *Sola fide in Christo* – we trust only Christ and what he has done in his suffering, death and resurrection, not in what we are doing and paying for in order to be relieved from eternal judgment; and *Sola gratia* – it is only by God's grace in his Son Jesus Christ that we will be saved from eternal judgment.

A primary objection to all agreements about justification with the Roman Catholic Church is that the canons and the practice of indulgences never came up for discussion. Indulgences are offered, sold, and bought in many ways, and this is and will remain contrary to word and sacrament. How can there be agreement in the *doctrine* of justification when the *practice* of indulgences denies it? Lutherans should not be so smug. We should ask ourselves if we are aware of God's judgment and punishment in our life for transgressing his commandments, especially when in official decisions and declarations there appears a justification of sin but not of the sinner by the call to repentance and forgiveness (cf. Rom 1:18–32; 1 Cor 6:9–11; Gal 5:16–26).

VI. The Tridentine Decrees Concerning Justification

Another subject not addressed before or after JDDJ is the Council of Trent (1545–1563). Trent was planned as a council for church reform and possibly for church reunion. Without doubt, it was the biggest council in church history, meeting in three periods over almost two decades and issuing 25 decrees, mostly on controversial questions, with corresponding condemnations.

We have to keep in mind that condemnation (Latin *damnamus*, Greek *avna*, *qema*) means to be exposed to God's judgment, losing eternal salvation. This is not just a juridical formula or some theological

²⁵ "... et ego, facultate mihi ab Apostolico Sede tribute, indulgentiam plenariam et remissionem omnium peccatorum tibi concede. In nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus Sancti". Quoted from "Breviarium Romanum."

interpretation, but it is an act of spiritual authority. We find this in the Pauline letters: "Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed [avna, qema],' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3, 16:22; Gal 1:8). Paul in speaking about the fate of Israel after the flesh implores with all pastoral love: "For I could wish that I myself were cursed (avna, qema) and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel" (Rom 9:1). This condemnation means to be put outside of salvation. If we think that doing theology is just interpreting historical texts, we will overlook the fact that the controversy addressed by the Reformation was about temporal and eternal judgment and salvation.

This means that the canons and condemnations of Trent are more than mere theological interpretations and changeable opinions. They are decisive for salvation and reprobation. It is a serious error that this aspect was never discussed or even mentioned in the theological dialogues. On the contrary, the Roman Catholic side insists that, because of their infallibility, those decisions can never be changed. For the Protestant theologians, the Council of Trent is merely situation-conditioned interpretation, and so its decision does not apply anymore because modern teaching has changed or developed.

What are the chief condemnations of the Council of Trent? We find them in the following decrees with added canons. The canons contain what is decisive and formulate the condemnations, usually printed with the small abbreviation *an. s.* – (*anathema sit*) which can easily be overlooked and, therefore, neglected by Protestant theologians. We have to look especially at the following decrees:

Decretum de libris sacris et de traditionibus recipiendis [Decree about the Holy Scriptures and about Traditions to be Received] (8.4.1546 – DS 1501-1508)

Decretum de peccato originis [Decree about Original Sin] (17.6.1546 – DS 1510-1516)

Decretum de justification [Decree about Justification] (13.1.1547 – DS 1520-1583)

Decretum de ss. Eucharistia [Decree about the Most Holy Eucharist] (11.10.1551 – DS 1635-1661)

Decretum de ss. Missae sacrificio [Decree about the Sacrifice of the Most Holy Mass] (17.9.1562 – DS 1738-1760)

Decretum de indulgentiis [Decree about Indulgences] (4.12.1563 – DS 1835)

Failure to investigate thoroughly all these documents by the commissions which prepared the JDDJ is inexcusable negligence. I can say

from my own experiences, commissions striving for agreement react very angrily to any objections against the majority position because agreement is already taken for truth. The commissions were usually not aware of the fact that all these decrees with their condemnations are—and on principle, must be—still valid today as they belong to the infallibility of the Roman church's *magisterium*. The common formula for the consensus wrongly states that these condemnations do not apply any longer, because doctrine has developed or changed. This is strange insofar as change and development of doctrine does not apply to the Roman Church but, as we have seen, to the modern Protestant understanding of theology conditioned by history and society. We will look at these decrees with this question in mind: Can agreement on justification exist when the decrees of Trent are still in effect?²⁶

The Decree about the Reception of the Holy Scriptures and Traditions

This decree says that the truth and discipline of the church's teaching and preaching are "contained in written books and unwritten traditions [*in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus*]." ²⁷ One God is the author of both, coming orally from Christ himself or dictated by the Holy Spirit and preserved in the continuous succession within the Roman Catholic Church. "Both are received and honored with the same affect and reverence of piety [*pari pietatis affectu et reverentia suscipit et veneratur*]." ²⁸ This decree is directed against *sola scriptura*, the teaching that the Holy Scriptures are the only means and norm through which the Holy Spirit is active. For Lutherans, church traditions are of human origin and therefore must be in agreement with the Holy Scriptures. In recent magisterial documents of the Roman Church, *sola scriptura* continues to be explicitly denied and refused. ²⁹ For Roman Catholics, church tradition refers to the official and authoritative teaching office (*magisterium*) of the bishop of Rome, and the other bishops. This is the binding norm for all teaching, preaching, and discipline in the Roman Church. Even as we should be concerned about the role of tradition in the Roman church, we should also

²⁶ There are other decrees and condemnations to be added, e.g. ones about penitence, extreme unction (DS 1667-1719) in which the above already mentioned criticism of the reformers against the practice of satisfactions is condemned.

²⁷ DS 1501.

²⁸ DS 1501.

²⁹ Such as the *Constitutio Dogmatica "Dei Verbum"* from Vatican II (§ 6), the *Declaration of the Papal Bible Commission about interpretation of the Bible in the Church* from 23.4.1993 and a declaration from the conference of German bishops. Cf. Reinhard Slenczka, "Geist und Buchstabe," *Neues und Altes: Aufsätze zu dogmatischen Themen* (Neuendettelsau: Freimund, 1999), 1:16-53.

ponder how much the *sola scriptura* is retained and understood in contemporary Protestant theology and church practice.

The Decree about Original Sin

Baptism is, as stated above, the means for receiving justification. The decree from Trent about original sin looks at the consequences of baptism in relation to original sin. It starts from the agreement that the consequences of Adam's sin are the wrath of God and death. It also makes clear that original sin is transmitted not by the way of imitation (*imitatione*), because that would mean the possibility of a freedom of choosing whether to sin or not. Sin is transmitted by propagation or procreation (*propagatione*). This means sin is inevitable for every human being, *the same way* birth and death are not matters of our free will. The decree then underlines the right and necessity of infant baptism against Anabaptists, who deny this under the presupposition that baptism is based upon personal conviction and decision.

Rome differs with the reformers on what happens to original sin in the baptized: Is sin entirely removed or simply not imputed? The reformers followed Augustine's teaching on this point: "not that it no longer exists, but that it is not accounted [as sin]" (*non ut non sit, sed ut non imputetur*).³⁰ The difference lies in the understanding of covetous desire (*evpiqumi*, a or *concupiscentia*). Is this sin or is it a mere inclination to sin that we can resist?

The reformers were not innovators when they taught that this desire or the passions of the flesh are sin as long as we live in the flesh. This is what Paul teaches in Romans 6–8. The reformers, therefore, admonished Christians not to follow the desires of the flesh but to live according to the Spirit received in baptism: *Simul justus et peccator* ("At the same time justified and sinner") and *peccator in re, justus in spe et fide* ("A sinner in fact, justified in hope and faith").

In spite of this, the Council of Trent said this about original sin: "This concupiscence, which the Apostle sometimes calls sin (Rom 7:12; 7:14–20), the holy council declares the Catholic Church has never understood to be called sin in the sense that it is truly and properly sin in those born again, but in the sense that it is of sin and inclines to sin. But if anyone is of the contrary opinion, let him be anathema."³¹ The desires and passions of the flesh are understood as *fomes peccati*, tinder of sin, coals of a glowing fire. If

³⁰ Ap II:36.

³¹ DS 1515.

you blow into it, it will flame up again, but this you must avoid. This means that the baptized is no longer a sinner, but an inclination towards sin remains in him which he must resist. This Roman Catholic view has serious consequences for the understanding of justification in baptism, as will become evident in the decree about justification.

The Decree about Justification

This decree is interesting insofar as justification is understood not as a doctrine about how God deals with us, but as the process that results from baptism. When working on a commission dealing with justification, I tried to show my Protestant and Roman Catholic colleagues that we must start from baptism. The commission was simply not able to understand my point. Therefore, the reference to baptism remained on the periphery, not in the center. This difference is neither seen nor discussed to this day. Is it not true that many Christians forget what they have received in and what they are through baptism?

The nucleus of the problem in this decree is the concept of progression after baptism (*progressus a baptismo*). The aim is to preserve the purity of the baptismal gown (DS 1531) and to grow or make progress in justification (DS 1535). You get grace in baptism as a gift from God, but this obligates you to grow in justification and to make faith a reality through works of love: "for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Gal 5:6).

Sola fide ("by faith alone") is mentioned two times with different connotations. It mentions *sola fide* positively insofar as it refers to God's gift in baptism and of sin/absolution (DS 1534). No one may doubt what Christ has done for us. But the decree also mentions *sola fide* negatively: we never can be sure and trust that we are perfect before God's judgment because "no one can know with certitude of faith, in which is no error, that he received God's grace" (DS 1534). "Therefore nobody may deceive himself to think that he by faith alone (*sola fide*) is appointed as heir and gets the heritage even if he doesn't share in Christ's sufferings in order to share also in his glory" (DS 1538). All this is about the certitude of faith (*fiducia, certitudo fidei*). Rather than trusting that faith will demonstrate itself in love, justification and sanctification are confused in an attempt to motivate the Christian to moral living. So the spiritual quality of faith turns over into secular psychology and morality. This is nothing new because today Protestant theology teaches the same thing.

On the other side, the reformers taught a *reditus ad baptismum*—return to baptism. This means that as long as we are living in the flesh of sin we

must return to justification received through the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us (Rom 7:8). This struggle will end only in death. Christian life, therefore, is the continuous dying of the old Adam in the sinful flesh and the raising up of the new man according to God's Spirit. This is what is meant by the formula *simul justus et peccator*. Looking at and relying upon what Christ has done for us and what we are through him and in him, we are justified; but looking at our flesh, sin will continue until our death.

To understand this, look again at the personal experience of Martin Luther. By the preaching and soul-caring of that time, he was deeply frightened in his conscience and driven by the question: "How do I get a gracious God?" In a sermon on Matthew 3:13-17, he tells his congregation how he tried with all kinds of self-torment to obtain the certitude that he would be accepted by God. But with this, he says, "I preached nothing more than to lose dear baptism, even helping to deny it. Therefore that we may not be seduced, let us keep pure this teaching . . . that baptism is not our work and doing and let us make a big and broad distinction between God's and our works."³² In this perspective, baptism is not a kind of initial ignition or impulse, but it is the remaining gift and activity of the Holy Spirit in the baptized. This we find in the first of the 95 *Theses* when he says, "it is the Lord's will that the whole Christian life is repentance."

Through baptism, we are united with Christ and Christ lives in us by faith (Eph 3:17; Rom 8:9-11).³³ Faith is not only cognition (*notitia*) or assent (*assensus*) to truths formulated by church authorities, but it is the spiritual reality of Christian life, the new life received in baptism.³⁴ This does not mean that good works are not necessary, but they grow out of faith. Faith without works is, of course, dead (James 2:17-20). Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, given through word and sacrament if and when it pleases God (CA 5). In his explanation of the third article in the Small Catechism, Luther teaches this in the way of a confession: "I believe that I from my own reason and power are not able to believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord or to

³² WA 37:661.25.

³³ "*In ipsa fide Christus adest*" (In faith itself Christ is present). Luther in his lecture on Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" WA 40, I:228.18 f. Cf. Eph 3:17; WA 17, I:436.1 ff.

³⁴ For more information see Reinhard Slenczka, "Glaube VI. Reformation / Neuzeit. Systematisch-theologisch," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* vol. XIII (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), 318-364.

come to him, but the Holy Ghost has called me through the gospel. . ."

If we look at the canons attached to the decree about justification, we will see that the decisive points of the teaching of the reformers are not only denied but condemned. For example, they condemn the teaching that the free will (*liberum arbitrium*) after the fall is lost and man is no longer able to return to God by his own abilities (Can 5). The *sola fide* is condemned repeatedly in Canons 9, 11, 14, 15. The argument describing the human condition is always a psychological one: not faith alone, but human endeavors also. This shows, however, that faith is not understood as the gift and activity of the Holy Spirit, but as human or intellectual ability for understanding and assent. Here we meet a problem that is present also in Protestant churches and theology, for instance in pastoral psychology and Christian ethics.

The Decree about the Most Holy Eucharist and the Decree about the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

As with the problem of indulgences, the problem of the mass as sacrifice is not addressed—perhaps even avoided—in JDDJ, but it is decisive for the understanding and practice of justification. The main controversy is whether the Eucharist is a sacrifice offered to God or received from God. This is linked with celebrating and buying masses for various needs and necessities (*aliae necessitates*) such as vows, the deceased, saints, intercessions, and the like, as is done still today.³⁵ The decree states that the priest alone celebrates the mass and that the words of institution are spoken not only in Latin but also *submissa voce* (that is, in silence or voiceless), and that the parishioner receive one species, the bread only, and that the sacrament is exposed for adoration in churches and processions. Any objections against these practices are condemned (*anathema sit*). Even arguments from the Scriptures against what is done and taught in the church are condemned and those making such arguments are to be excommunicated.

In this regard, the reformers reformed the worship, refusing and putting aside abuses that came into church life contrary to the will of the Lord who gave his body and blood for neither adoration, nor business but for salvation. In his own words, the Lord is present and acting; therefore, the words of institution must not be in Latin but in the vernacular, not in silence but spoken aloud as proclamation to the congregation. What we receive orally is what he tells us in his words. In the *Smalcald Articles*,

³⁵ This is seen in "Codex Juris Canonici," 1983: Canons 945-951, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_P3D.HTM.

Luther stated quite clearly that the article about the mass is and remains the biggest difference. On this there can be no compromise.³⁶ For Luther, corruption of the mass as in baptism meant a corruption of the doctrine of justification.

The Decree about Indulgences

The Council of Trent admits that there have been abuses in the practice of indulgences which should be removed. They affirm, however, that indulgences are based on and justified by Christ's commission to Peter and the church to loose and to bind, according to Matthew 16:19 and 18:18:

The power to confer indulgences is a concession of Christ for the Church and used since old times. Therefore the most Holy Synod teaches and orders to retain the use of indulgences, as it is very salutary for the Christian people and proved by the authority of holy councils. The Synod therefore condemns those who deny that indulgences are of no use or deny the authority of the church to concede them (DS 1835).

This quotation shows that in traditional Roman Catholic teaching indulgences refer not only to deliverance from temporal punishment, but also to forgiveness of sin. This is clear from the traditional formula (quoted above) for the application of indulgences in case of dying which runs as follows: "Through the faculty which is conferred to me by the Apostolic See, I concede to you plenary indulgence and remission of all sins."³⁷ Because this teaching and practice is fixed in Canon Law and continues to this day, it is simply unreasonable to proclaim an agreement about justification.

VII. Conclusions

The main question is what agreement about justification is, or could be, or even must be. Before us are not only doctrinal controversies as an historical fact of the Reformation period but the present practices of our respective churches. Most interchurch conversations cope with the past in trying to restore lost unity of churches or open the way for church communion, which consists first of all in sacramental communion. But what really is church communion? This is not at all a uniform and universal church organization as we have it in the Roman Church from the times of the old Holy Roman Empire. Church unity is sacramental, based

³⁶ SA II, 2:1.

³⁷ "Et ego, facultate mihi ab Apostolica Sede tributa, indulgentiam plenariam et remissionem omnium peccatorum tibi concedo. In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen. (Formula ad impertiendam Indulgentiam plenariam in articulo mortis). Breviarium Romanum.

on the pure preaching of the gospel and the right administration of sacraments. For this, we do not need a unity or uniformity of rites instituted by men, as it is expressed quite simply and clearly in Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession. We even do not need a unity of organization, the so-called *ecclesia repraesentativa*. If we understand church unity as sacramental, this means that the Triune God is acting by these instruments through his Spirit-giving faith where and when it pleases him (CA 5). In God's word, we do not have the promise of a universal church organization. What we have and see is struggle, temptation, and persecution not only from the outside but also within the church. This is promised by the Lord in what is called little apocalypse (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 12, 19, 25) and in the Book of Revelation.

This struggle between the true and the false church is taking place not only between separated churches but within every church as it does within every Christian, between the old man in the sin of the flesh and the new man reborn by the Spirit in Baptism (Romans 6–8). It is a grievous fault that ecumenical conversations are exclusively about agreement, excluding and avoiding any statement of disagreement. At the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) insisted that without the term "heresy," ecumenical conversations will inevitably lose their confessional substance.³⁸ It is a general pitfall in church and theology that we generally think about doctrine in terms of historical development, interpretation, and change, not in terms of true and false doctrine under the perspective that the church remains in the truth, given and preserved by the Holy Spirit (John 14:15; 15:26; 16:5–9). As the apostle Paul says, there must be schisms and they appear first at the communion table: "In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions (*sci, smata*) among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences (*ai`re, seij*) among you to show which of you have God's approval" (1 Cor 11:18–19).

In this look back at the JDDJ, I emphasize the doctrine of justification cannot be isolated from the practices of the churches stemming from the Reformation. To put it quite bluntly, the consensus of the JDDJ was reached only because the still prevailing differences in Roman Catholic Church teaching and practice, such as indulgences and the sacrifice of the mass, were divorced from justification and ignored. Therefore, it cannot be

³⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Gesammelte Schriften* 1, 180 (München: C. Kaiser, 1958), vgl. 126. Cf.: Reinhard Slenczka, "Dogma und Kircheneinheit," in: Carl Andresen, A. M. Ritter (Hg.), *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 3:461.

a surprise that on August 6, 2000, the Roman Congregation on Doctrine under its then prefect, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, issued the *Declaration Dominus Jesus* with explicit papal approbation reminding and underlining the *Uniqueness and Universality for Salvation of Jesus Christ and the Church*. Additionally the then Cardinal Ratzinger also stressed, because of the church's infallibility, that the Canons of the Council of Trent never can be changed or omitted.

On the other side, we have seen that there is no agreement about justification among the member LWF churches as it was seen at its Plenary Assembly of Helsinki in 1963. In my judgment the main error is that justification is understood as an interpretation of certain historically conditioned doctrines determined by the questions raised by modern man.³⁹ Justification is not seen as the activity of the Triune God in word and sacrament, especially baptism, and in contrition, confession, and forgiveness of sin. This means that the main presuppositions and aims of church reform were neglected by historical relativism or perhaps simply ignored and put aside. In fact, recent years have seen the growth of issues that divide the church, such as ordination of women to lead congregations, blessing of same sex partnerships, feminist translations of the Bible and corresponding changes in liturgies with the invention of new names for God, male and female, following so-called political correctness.⁴⁰

The convergence or consensus about the doctrine of justification very simply is an illusion in saying that the differences and even the condemnations of the Reformation no longer apply in modern times and to the teaching in the respective churches. But the reality in church practice on both sides is neglected, and serious questions must be addressed by both sides to the other. For future conversations, I would like to highlight four central subjects:

First, do we acknowledge that Holy Scriptures are the word of the Triune God in which he reveals himself in what he is, what he does and what he demands? The Holy Scriptures are often understood only as texts from ancient times. This implies that sacraments also are understood not as

³⁹ See discussion in Part II and notes 14–15 above.

⁴⁰ In a recent interview the now president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Walter Cardinal Kasper, mentioned the following differences: Birth control, abortion, embryonic research, same sex partnerships. In *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 16, 2008. With good reason he asks, whether the *sola scriptura* is still valid in protestant churches

instituted by the Lord acting in his word, but by the post Easter church.⁴¹

Second, the very nucleus and spiritual center of the church is worship. Church communion (fellowship) in practice is admission to Baptism and to the Holy Supper, and this always is linked with the confession that Jesus is the Son of God. The proclamation of the word is open for the whole world. There are also limits of church fellowship, since Baptism and Holy Supper are the visible signs and elements of the spiritual unity within the body of Christ, and the common confession as given through the Holy Spirit is the visible and audible sign of this unity. Admission to the sacraments always is spiritual and a matter of pastoral decision in the sense of *dia, krisij pneuma, twn—discretion of spirits* (1 Cor 12:10). Therefore, church communion can never be just a formal agreement between theologians of different churches. This could be a framework. But the reality of church communion lies always in the responsibility of the local congregation and the pastor who is responsible for his flock before God with admission or reprobation.

Third, another point is the understanding of faith. Most of the documents for agreement in doctrine give the impression that faith is understood as knowledge (*notitia*) and assent (*assensus*) to certain formulas issued by church authorities or theological commissions. That is why commissions expect or even demand that these results must be received the same way as they were received in the commissions: by majority vote. But if we see and keep in mind that faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit, there must be the discernment of spirits between what is true and what is false.

Fourth, justification is not a special, peculiar, or unique new doctrine of the Reformation. The central issue of church reform was soul-caring and the criticism against a kind of soul-caring either by psychological or even juridical pressure and money. With this observation, I am not only looking back or at the Roman church but also at ourselves and the use—even predominance—of psychological methods and means in church and theology.⁴² It rather is about the decision whether a church is a church or just a church with a name only, as the Lord says to the congregation in Sardes: "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a name of being alive, but you are dead" (Rev 3:1). This is

⁴¹ See the Lima Documents on "Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry" by the Commission on Faith and order, 1983.

⁴² For further information see: Reinhard Slenczka, *Ziel und Ende. Einweisung in die christliche Endzeiterwartung: 'Der Herr ist nahe'* (Neuendettelsau: Freimund, 2008), 201-216.

not some judgment about others, but should be a reason for self examination in light of God's word and activity.

Has *JDDJ* resulted in agreement on the doctrine of justification? Serious differences on the subject existed among Lutherans before 1999 that continue today. Even more so, the signing of this doctrinal document has not resulted in a more unified doctrinal practice among Roman Catholics and Lutherans. No matter what is confessed in *JDDJ*, we must also look at what is confessed by actual church practices. Disagreements on justification that have their roots in the Reformation remain.

The Consensus of Sandomierz: An Early Attempt to Create a Unified Protestant Church in 16th Century Poland and Lithuania

Darius Petkunas

In early April 1570, representatives of the Reformed, Lutheran, and Bohemian Brethren Churches in Poland and Lithuania met in the city of Sandomierz for an extraordinary general synod. The purpose was to formulate a common confession which would symbolize the united faith and practice of the three churches to the crown and the parliament. The result was the formulation and acceptance of the *Consensus of Sandomierz* (Latin: *Consensus Sandomiriensis*).¹

The signing of the *Consensus of Sandomierz* has been regarded as a watershed event, unique not only in the history of the Polish and Lithuanian Churches, but in the Reformation era. It was here that, for the first time, representatives of three separate Protestant confessions with diverse theological and liturgical traditions stated that the chief obstacles in the way of church union had been overcome. They were now essentially united in faith, making intercommunion possible. Future efforts would make the realization of this unity evident to all.

Never before had Lutherans been willing to concede so much in order to enter a consensus, even though there was no agreement on the essential sacramental issues. In the 1520s, Lutherans had even refused to enter into a military alliance with Zwinglian and other Reformed princes and territories to create a common defense in the face of what seemed to be an inevitable attack from Roman Catholic military forces. At Marburg in 1529, Luther and Ulrich Zwingli were unable to come to an agreement concerning the nature of Christ's presence in the Sacrament of the Altar thereby dooming any possibility of a common Protestant front against the Roman Catholic Church. At Augsburg in 1530, the representatives of the cities of Strassburg, Constance, Memmingen, and Lindau, which had not

¹ Maria Sipayłło, *Opracowała, Akta Synodów różnowierczych w Polsce Tom II (1560-1570)*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1972), 295-298.

Darius Petkunas is an ordained pastor in the Lithuanian Lutheran Church and serves on its consistory. He was a member of the Faculty of Evangelical Theology at the University of Klaipeda in Lithuania from 1996-2008.

agreed to the sacramental articles of the *Augsburg Confession*, were forced to hastily prepare a separate document, called the *Tetrapolitan Confession*, to present before the Emperor.² The *Consensus of Sandomierz*, therefore, represents the first instance of a statement of unity between the Lutherans and the Reformed. What had not been possible before happened here in Poland and Lithuania in an event which some historians have thought to be a precursor to the Prussian Union in 1817, more than two centuries later.³

The *Consensus of Sandomierz* has been generally understood in three different ways. In the eyes of the Polish and Lithuanian Reformed Churches, the *Consensus* has always been regarded as a truly significant monument, a pledge of full union between the three confessions. A host of synodical protocols and other official church documents have called attention to the *Consensus* in regards to ongoing relations with the Lutherans.⁴ The same opinion is shared by the eminent Protestant historian, Theodor Wotschke, of the Prussian Union Church, who says that the *Consensus of Sandomierz* must not be considered a political document but a religious statement of theological convergence.⁵

Lutherans, on the other hand, have taken a wholly different position. The 18th century Lutheran historian Christian Gottlieb von Friese characterized the work at Sandomierz as tentative, incomplete, and based on an inadequate understanding of the classical Lutheran position. He went on to state that the *Consensus of Sandomierz* greatly weakened Lutheranism in both Poland and Lithuania.⁶

Secular historians have regarded the *Consensus* primarily as a political document. Łukaszewicz, Szujski, Lukšaitė, and others are of the opinion that the document produced little more than a statement of intention mapping out a course of action not yet realized, produced by church officials who gave little thought to the immediate and practical

² Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical notes, vol. I: The History of Creeds* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 525–529.

³ Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 588; Theodor Wotschke, *Geschichte der Reformation in Polen in Studien zur Kultur und Geschichte der Reformation Verein für Reformationsgeschichte*, Bd. 1 (Halle: Haupt, 1911), 250.

⁴ Ingė Lukšaitė, *Reformacija Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje ir Mažojoje Lietuvoje. XVI a. trečias dešimtmetis - XVII a. pirmas dešimtmetis* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1999), 336.

⁵ Wotschke, *Reformation in Polen*, 250.

⁶ Christian Gottlieb von Friese *Beyträge, zu der Reformationsgeschichte in Polen und Litthauen besonders*, Teil 2, Bd. 1. (Breslau: Korn, 1786); Lukšaitė, *Reformacija*, 32.

consequences of the agreement.⁷ They hold that the *Consensus* came too late to be of consequence. The time for the establishment of a national Protestant church had come and gone. The Jesuits had arrived and were on the offensive, and so the counter-Reformation had already begun.

It is not sufficient that we form our evaluation of the *Consensus* without closely examining the document itself and its theological arguments. Only by doing this is one able to understand what the synod of Sandomierz did and its place in Polish and Lithuanian church history. The purpose of this study is to satisfy the need for such an examination.

I. The Road to Sandomierz

The *Consensus of Sandomierz* came at the end of a series of meetings between 1555 and 1570 during which representatives from the Reformed, Lutheran, and Bohemian Brethren congregations sought to work out their theological and liturgical relationships. A close relationship had already existed between the Minor Polish Reformed and the Bohemian Brethren because the Reformed had looked to the Bohemian Brethren for theological and ecclesiastical guidance. As a result, full communion was declared between these two confessions in 1555 at the Koźminek Convocation.⁸ This relationship was a model for future negotiations, as well as an impulse toward further unification efforts among Polish Protestants.

The first to move resolutely toward a unified Protestant church in the region was Johannes a Lasco, who had returned to Poland in 1557 from England during the reign of Queen Mary. He held before people the vision of a united Protestant church in Poland and Lithuania. The first step toward this goal was taken at the Włodzisław Synod on June 15–18, 1557.⁹ Lasco personally asked whether for the sake of Polish Protestantism it might not be advisable that the groups represented in this synod to enter theological discussions with the Lutherans.¹⁰ For this purpose, he

⁷ Józef Łukasiewicz, *O kościołach Braci Czeskich w dawnej Wielkiej Polsce* (Poznań, 1835), 112; Józef Szujski, *Dzieje Polski*, T. 2. (Kraków: Pompejusz, 1894), 399; Oskar Halecki, *Zgoda Sandomierska 1570 R. jej geneza i znaczenie w dziejach reformacji Polskiej za Zygmunta Augusta* (Warszawa: Gebethner and Wolff, 1915), 274–275; Lukšaitė, *Reformacja*, 336.

⁸ Maria Sipayłło, *Opracowała, Akta Synodów różnowierczych w Polsce*, Tom I (1550–1559), (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1966), 18–45.

⁹ Sipayłło, *Akta Synodów I*, 201.

¹⁰ The Minor Polish Reformed who were in the union with the Bohemian Brethren saw the possibility after the Koźminek Union of 1555 that the closer proximity between the Lutheran and Bohemian Eucharistic theologies might provide the key to Protestant unity in Poland. Although the Reformed and Bohemians were moving in quite different

proposed a colloquium with the Lutherans.¹¹ This invitation was rejected. The Lutherans did not think that there was sufficient agreement in sacramental teaching to make the union possible. The convocation of the Minor Polish Reformed and Bohemian Brethren in Gołuchów, held on October 16, 1557, failed to produce any positive results because the Lutherans were not present. The Reformed used this fact as one of the reasons for their own refusal to participate, although a few ministers actually did. The Bohemians recognized that Lasco's vision was unrealistic because Polish Lutherans were beginning to question their sacramental orthodoxy. They also expressed the conviction that no further discussions with the Polish Lutherans were really necessary, since agreement had been reached in 1536 with Luther and Melancthon.¹²

Lasco remained undaunted by this early failure. He understood that most Polish Lutherans were strongly under the influence of the Prussian Lutherans and the Königsberg theological faculty. He, therefore, contacted Albrecht of Brandenburg (1490-1568), Duke of Prussia, for the purpose of initiating theological discussions on controversial doctrinal issues. Upon his arrival in Königsberg on April 14, 1558, he entered into a public disputation concerning the doctrine of the Sacrament of the Altar and the two natures of Christ. He was unable to move the Lutherans from their doctrinal position. After the disputation, he sought to regain the favor of the Lutherans by presenting a summary of his doctrinal position and calling upon them to enter into a fraternal association in order that they might do battle together against the Roman church. Lasco died unexpectedly in 1560 and never saw the realization of his proposals for reunion, but the dream of a national Protestant Church in Poland and Lithuania did not die with him.¹³

Further discussions were carried on between the Bohemian Brethren and the Lutherans in Major Poland. Their relationship was not altogether cordial, because they disagreed about the Sacrament of the Altar and other related doctrines. The Lutherans were invited to the Bohemian Synod in Poznań on November 1, 1560.¹⁴ The eighth canon of that synod recommended achieving common agreement on the nature of Christ's

theological directions in sacramental practice, the terms of this union were reaffirmed in Pińczów in 1556, Włodzisław in 1557, and Książ in 1560. Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów I*, 53-78, 179-208; Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 32-68.

¹¹ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów I*, 201.

¹² Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów I*, 228-229.

¹³ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 69 fn. 1; Halina Kowalska, *Działalność reformatorska Jana Łaskiego w Polsce 1556-1560* (Warszawa: Neriton, 1999), 70.

¹⁴ Łukaszewicz, *O kościołach Braci Czeskich*, 54.

presence in the sacrament.¹⁵ Since some Lutheran pastors accused the Bohemians of false doctrine from their pulpits, no such agreement could be formulated. In 1563, the Lutherans and Bohemian Brethren again conferred to consider the charges which Benedykt Morgerstern had leveled against the Bohemians.¹⁶ These included questions concerning repentance born of faith, the role of confirmation, and, most significantly, the presence of Christ under the form of bread and wine. The Lutherans and Bohemians made further efforts to find a basis for agreement on important doctrinal issues in 1565 at Gostyń. Once again, their efforts failed. As a result of the meeting, the Lutherans drew up a list of 16 points on which they considered the Bohemians to be in error.¹⁷ At the Synod in Poznań on January 28, 1567, Lutherans again leveled charges raised earlier by Morgerstern against the Bohemians. In response, the Bohemians appealed to the Wittenberg Faculty, which dismissed the charges and declared the *Bohemian Confession* to be orthodox.¹⁸ As expected, Crypto-Calvinists on the Wittenberg faculty issued an opinion which approved the position of the Bohemians. The favorable Wittenberg '*Gutachten*' seems to have had the desired positive effect, because the Polish Lutherans had always regarded the opinions of the Wittenberg faculty to be authoritative.

The most urgent impulse toward union came from King Sigismund Augustus. He promised not to persecute dissenters, and, in the last session of the Lublin parliament in 1569, he expressed his desire that there be only one Protestant church in his realm.¹⁹ The Protestants took the king's statement to mean that there could be but one Protestant confession which would serve as the basis of a Protestant union. They thought that this would satisfy the king and achieve religious liberty. The king expressed to some of the senators his hope that there would be peace among his Protestant subjects.²⁰

¹⁵ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 71.

¹⁶ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 169.

¹⁷ Jolanta Dworaczkowa, *Bracia Szescy w Wielkopolsce w XVI i XVII wieku* (Warszawa: Semper, 1997), 37.

¹⁸ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 210–212; Łukaszewicz, *O kościołach Braci Czeskich*, 69–70; Wotschke, *Reformation in Polen*, 239–240.

¹⁹Theodor Wotschke, *Der Briefwechsel der Schweizer mit den Polen* (Leipzig, 1908), 315; Halecki *Zgoda Sandomierska 1570*, 145–146; Jaroslav Pelikan, "The Consensus of Sandomierz: A Chapter from the Polish Reformation" *Concordia Theological Monthly* 18 (1947): 833.

²⁰ Wotschke, *Der Briefwechsel der Schweizer mit den Polen*, 328–329; Halecki, *Zgoda Sandomierska 1570*, 169.

The Protestants immediately attempted to take advantage of what they perceived to be an ideal situation to achieve official status. However, they needed to be able to present themselves as a church united in faith and confession in the eyes of the king and people. This task could not be easily accomplished. The Lutherans met with the Bohemians in colloquy at Poznań on February 14, 1570. A key point in the discussion was concern about the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, particularly the nature of Christ's presence in the bread and the wine and the adoration of the body of Christ in the Supper. The Lutherans insisted upon the use of the terminology of the *Augsburg Confession* and their Lutheran fathers, that Christ's presence in the Supper is *substantialiter*, *realiter*, *essentialiter*, *corporaliter*.²¹ The Bohemian Brethren, while insisting that the bread is the true body of Christ and the wine is his true blood, rejected the Lutheran terminology. They preferred to define Christ's presence in the earthly elements as *sacramentaliter*,²² in a manner unique to the Sacrament of the Altar. They refused to adopt the language of the *Augsburg Confession*, protesting that their own confessional position was correct and adequate. The Bohemians did not agree with the Lutheran identification of bread and body, wine and blood. On this and the nature of faith of baptized children, the Lutherans and the Bohemians differed considerably. They determined to postpone further discussion of these matters until the general synod to be held in Sandomierz.

A sudden breakthrough came at Vilnius. Here the goals which the Poles had failed to achieve in their February meeting in Poznań were accomplished. Representatives of both groups met on March 2-4, 1570, in Vilnius under the auspices of Mikołaj Radziwiłł the Brown. They succeeded in devising a formula of agreement between the two churches. Although we have only indirect information concerning this meeting,²³ it is generally understood that it was agreed that church buildings would be opened for the use of both groups, the official acts of ministers of both churches would be mutually recognized, and both churches would work together in the matters relating to the government.²⁴ Some have suggested that agreement was also reached on the Lord's Supper, but no definite evidence of this exists. We may suggest that any agreement of this nature would have been cast in very general terms, such as would be acceptable

²¹ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 239.

²² Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 239-240.

²³ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 291; Danielis Ernesti Jablonski, *Historia Consensus Sandomiriensis* (Berlin: Haude, 1731), 35-36; Friese, Teil 2. Bd. 1., 432; A. F. Adamowicz, *Kościół augsburski w Wilnie* (Wilno: Korn, 1855), 53-54.

²⁴ Lukšaitė, *Reformacija*, 334.

to both the Reformed and Lutherans. The Vilnius meeting was local and could serve only as a model. The formulation of an acceptable confession would emerge only after prolonged and serious debate in the Synod of Sandomierz.

II. The Formulation of the *Consensus* at Sandomierz

On April 9–14, 1570, representatives of the Polish and Lithuanian Reformed, Lutherans, and Bohemian Brethren met in the general synod at Sandomierz to formulate a document mutually recognizing the basic orthodoxy of all three groups and to work toward the creation of a united Protestant church. The gathering was dominated by Calvinists who outnumbered the Lutherans and Bohemian Brethren. The aristocrats who were present were also mostly Calvinists. In their attempts to maintain the particular theological and ecclesiastical stance of their churches, each of the three groups presented its own classical confession as a working model from which a general agreement could be drawn. For the Bohemians, this was the *Confessio Bohemica* 1535, which, as they pointed out, had already been accepted by Luther and the Lutheran Reformers. The Lutherans took the position that the *Bohemian Confession* was only one of several confessions and these did not represent a united position. Therefore, they suggested that the *Confessio Augustana* 1530 alone could serve as the model. The Reformed, who were clearly in the majority, looked to the *Second Helvetic Confession* of 1566 as representative of the true spirit of Protestantism.

On Tuesday, April 11, after the report of the Vilnius agreement between the Lutherans and Reformed of Lithuania was read, it was decided that the *Second Helvetic Confession* should be used as the basis for their discussion. The Reformed view prevailed by majority vote.²⁵ The next day the reading and discussion of the confession was completed. Still, each group wanted its own confession to be the basis for consensus.

The Reformed, nevertheless, moved for the acceptance of their *Second Helvetic Confession*. The Bohemians noted that such acceptance would be possible only if they would be allowed to retain their own *Bohemian Confession* and their distinct form of worship and ceremonies. This caught the Lutherans off guard. In the face of this pressure, the Lutheran representatives Mikolai Gliczner and Erazm Gliczner, the Superintendent of the Lutheran Church in Major Poland since 1566, stated that they could not accept the Calvinist confession while remaining loyal to the *Augsburg Confession*. They would agree to a further meeting if its purpose was

²⁵ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 272–279, 286–287.

formulating a completely new confession to satisfy the doctrinal concerns of all three groups.²⁶ This threw everyone into confusion, yet it was agreed that all three groups should meet together in Warszawa (Warsaw) on the feast of the Holy Trinity to formulate the new confession.²⁷

The Lutherans insisted that much work remained to be done before a definitive statement of common confession could be produced. The prevailing opinion of the other two churches was that this meeting must produce some common statement which would demonstrate to the Polish and Lithuanian nations that all three churches shared the same general presuppositions and were able to work together. This task was not easily done, because important doctrinal differences still remained. In their discussions on April 13, the delegates decided to use the Vilnius agreement of March as the basis for their own common statement. The *Consensus Sandomiriensis* which came to be known as the *Formula Recensus* of April 14th represents the results of their negotiations at Sandomierz.²⁸

III. An Examination of the *Consensus*

The *Consensus* begins by stating the high regard in which these churches held each other and the measure of common agreement that they had reached. The Latin text does not speak of the formula as an *Act of Religious Union*, as translated by Krasinski.²⁹ It describes itself rather as *Consensus mutuus in religionis Christianae*, namely, a statement of mutual consent in matters of the Christian faith.³⁰ The second paragraph pronounces the rejection, by all three groups, of all heresies that are inimical to the gospel and God's truth, which had plagued the Protestant churches in these countries. In the third paragraph all three churches affirm that they regard each other as pious and orthodox in their theological statements concerning God, the Holy Trinity, and other primary articles. They also pledge to defend this mutual confession against all foes. The next paragraph states that the words of Christ in the Supper must be understood in such a manner that both the earthly and heavenly elements are recognized. These elements and signs exhibit and present by faith what they signify, so that the substantial presence of Christ is represented, distributed, and exhibited to those who eat and drink. For purposes of clarification, a section from *Confessio Saxonica* beginning with

²⁶ Sipaylo, *Akta Synodów II*, 290.

²⁷ Sipaylo, *Akta Synodów II*, 291.

²⁸ See appendix for the complete document.

²⁹ Valerian Krasinski, *Historical Sketch of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Reformation in Poland*. Vol. I. (London: Murray, 1838), 383.

³⁰ Sipaylo, *Akta Synodów II*, 295.

the words *Et baptismus et Coena Domini* is appended here. The fifth paragraph pledges that those who agree to this *Consensus* are to be acknowledged as orthodox Christians and treated with Christian charity. In the sixth paragraph, the signers resolved to persuade their brethren to conform to this *Consensus* by mutual participation attending the others' services and intercommunion (i.e., sacramental participation). In the next paragraph, rites and ceremonies of each church are designated *adiaphora*, as is stated in the Augsburg and Saxon Confessions. In the paragraph that follows, attendance and participation in the general synods of the participating churches are encouraged and hope is expressed that in the future it will be possible to formulate a common body of doctrine to be confessed by all the churches. In the penultimate paragraph, the signers pledged to build up both faith and peace, avoiding all occasions of alienation and promoting only the glory of Christ and the truth of his word by their own words and actions. Finally, the blessing of God is invoked on the *Consensus*. The signatures of all those subscribing on behalf of their churches concluded the document.

Although formal confessions ordinarily begin with a positive statement and then make note of rejected opinions, the *Consensus of Sandomierz* reverses this order and begins with a statement rejecting the erroneous opinions of sectarian Tritheites, Ebionites, and Anabaptists. The delegates had good reason to do this. In the past, the Reformation churches in Poland had been beset with contentious conflicts and sects which made it appear that these churches, particularly the Reformed, had departed from orthodoxy. In 1562-1563, the Antitrinitarian teachings, which had reached the highest levels in the leadership of the church, had caused a division and the establishment of separate churches. Sectarian and heretical teachings caused the Reformed Church to lose its place in the esteem of the Polish and Lithuanian people and made the quest for official recognition all the more difficult. These churches wanted to distance themselves from all such heresies.

The use of plural pronouns (e.g., we, they, our, and their) is somewhat perplexing in a document which claims to be the common statement of all three groups. One would expect that the pronouns "we" and "our" would refer to the consenting churches and "they" and "their" would refer to those not part of the *Consensus*. This, however, is not the case. Although definitions seem to change from one paragraph to another, the overall impression is given that the document was written chiefly from the perspective of the Reformed delegates who were in the majority. For example, we find this statement: "As both we who in the present Synod have published our confession and the Bohemian Brethren have never

believed that those who adhere to the Augsburg Confession. . . .” “We” (*nos*) and “have never believed” (*nunquam credidimus*) clearly refer to the Reformed Church over against the Bohemian Brethren and Lutherans.

The signers determined that there were no fundamental doctrinal differences among themselves. The Reformed and the Bohemian Brethren have never called into question the orthodoxy of the chief articles confessed by the Lutheran Church concerning God, the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of Christ, and justification. From their point of view, adherents of the *Augsburg Confession* openly stated that they could see nothing contrary to Christian orthodoxy and the word of God as confessed in these same articles by the Reformed and the Bohemian Brethren.

There were wide areas of agreement between the churches in these chief articles. One article in which there were differences between the Lutherans and the Reformed was the incarnation of the Son of God, the area upon which Luther and his followers drew upon most heavily in support of their understanding of the nature of Christ’s bodily presence in the bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Altar. The Reformed would agree with every word of the *Augsburg Confession* in Article III, “Concerning the Son of God.” The Lutherans, however, understood this article from the standpoint of Christological positions taken by Luther in his polemical writings against Zwingli, Karlstadt, and Oecolampadius in 1525–1529.³¹ Very early in the Reformation, Luther saw the essential connection between the doctrine of the two natures of the incarnate Son of God and the nature of Christ’s physical presence in the bread and the wine of the Lord’s Supper, while the Reformed did not. For Luther, Christ is present in the sacrament in a similar way in which he is present in the incarnation. The body of Jesus is the body of God; the blood of Jesus is God’s blood. It is the body and blood of him who is both completely God and man that was crucified for man’s sins and raised again for his justification. Thus Luther, in his *Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper* of 1528 says, “in the Sacrament of the Altar the true body and blood of Christ are orally eaten and drunk in the bread and wine.”³² From the Reformed perspective such teaching was rejected since the separate human and divine natures of Christ were not understood to relate directly to each other, but each separately related to the person of Christ. Thus, the *Communicatio idiomatum* can never be more than a play on words and an expression,

³¹ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1986), 37:41–42 (Henceforth LW).

³² LW 37:367.

which Calvin said was unfortunate. The human nature can never be more than the symbol or sign of the heavenly.

Earlier colloquies between the Reformed and Lutherans in Poland and Lithuania had proceeded directly to this Christological issue. For example, in the meeting held in late 1557 and early 1558, the Lithuanian Reformed theologian Szymon Zacjusz directed his fire against the Lutheran understanding of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament on precisely this basis. He stated that although the divine nature is unlimited, the human nature is limited with regard to time and space. Christ's physical presence in the earthly elements, therefore, can only be a figurative presence. In the same way, Christ's descent into hell and other experiences are inappropriate matters of discussion, if the divine nature is the subject.³³ Also, Lasco's public disputation at Königsberg in April 1558 was concerned with the Sacrament of the Altar and the two natures of Christ. He was unsuccessful in moving Lutherans from their doctrinal position.³⁴ This position is also seen in *De Confessione ministrorum ecclesiae Vilnensis* (1560) in which the Vilnius Reformed parish addressed the Prussian pastors. Central attention was given to the question of Christ's presence, the adoration of the sacrament, and related matters articulated on the basis of Reformed theology.³⁵ The same is the case in the meetings between the Lutherans and the Bohemian Brethren in Major Poland. At convocations held between 1560 and 1570 at Sandomierz, they were not able to resolve these matters to everyone's satisfaction.

Any assertion that the Lutherans, Reformed, and Bohemian Brethren were now in agreement concerning the incarnation can only be made if one ignores the fact that Lutherans understood the mutual relation of the two natures on the basis of the *communicatio idiomatum* confessed at Chalcedon (AD 451) and that the Reformed understood that phrase on the basis of the philosophical principle *finitum non capax infiniti* ("the finite is not capable of the infinite"). The assembly at Sandomierz avoided the Christological problem altogether. The *Consensus* sidesteps the issue by stating that the churches are in essential agreement with reference to the incarnation. This question along with the unresolved issues concerning the

³³ *Akta tho iest sprawy Zboru krześciańskiego Wileńskiego, ktore się poszły Roku Pańskiego 1557 Miesiąca Decembra Dnia 14... 1559, Monumenta Reformationis Polonicae et Lithuanicae*. Serya X, Zeszyt I. (Wilno: E. Wende i Spolka, 1913), 10–11.

³⁴ Kowalska, *Działalność reformatorska*, 70.

³⁵ Theodor Wotschke, "Vergerios zweite Reise nach Preußen u. Lithauen. Ein Btr. z. Reformationsgesch. des Ostens," in *Altpreussische Monatsschrift* Bd. 48 (Königsberg: Thomas and Oppermann, 1911), 302–303.

Sacrament of the Altar and predestination would reappear constantly in later discussions. Finally, when they invited the Lutherans to stand together with them at the *Colloquium Charitativum* in 1644, the Reformed and Bohemian Brethren had to acknowledge that agreement on the incarnation could not be accomplished. Thus, they asked the Lutherans to avoid going into detail on this controversial point.³⁶

Having stated the essential agreement of all parties regarding major Christian doctrines, the *Consensus* then turns to a more detailed description of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. It states:

Moreover, as far as the unfortunate difference of opinion on the Lord's Supper is concerned, we agree on the meaning of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, as they have been understood in an orthodox manner by the fathers, and especially by Irenaeus, who said that this mystery consists of two elements, namely, an earthly and a heavenly one. Nor do we assert that those elements or signs are bare and empty; we state, rather, that at the same time by faith they actually [*re ipsa*] exhibit and present that which they signify. Finally, to put it more clearly and expressly, we have agreed to believe and confess that the substantial presence of Christ is not merely signified, but that the body and blood of the Lord are represented, distributed, and exhibited to those who eat by the symbols applied to the thing itself, and that the symbols are not at all bare, according to the nature of the sacraments. But lest the diversity of manners of speaking bring forth another controversy, we have decided by mutual consent, in addition to the article which is inserted into our Confession, to add the article of the Confession of the Saxon churches on the Lord's Supper, sent to the Council of Trent in 1551, which we acknowledge as correct and have accepted.³⁷

First, it is recognized that there has been an unhappy (*infelix*) disagreement with regard to this doctrine. The delegates, however, sought to affirm some agreement concerning this matter. They state that they are "*convenimus in sententia verborum*," that is, "they agree in the sense of the words" as they have been understood in an orthodox manner by the fathers. In their search for consensus, the delegates found it helpful to make use of a distinction originally introduced by Irenaeus of Lyon in his polemic against those who spiritualized the resurrection. He noted that two realities or sides are present in the sacrament, the earthly and the

³⁶ Łukaszewicz, *O kościołach Braci Czeskich*, 212.

³⁷ English translation quoted from Pelikan, "The Consensus of Sandomierz," 827-828.

heavenly, and states that its blessings are both earthly and heavenly. Both the body and soul of the communicants are rendered incorruptible by the sacrament.³⁸

This quotation from Irenaeus was often cited in Reformation sacramental debates. Martin Bucer made use of it in his attempt to bring the Reformed and Lutherans into agreement at the *Wittenberg Colloquium* of 1536. In the original statement, Irenaeus spoke of these two realities as united into one. Bucer, however, divided them, saying: "We confess in agreement with the words of Irenaeus that the Eucharist consists of two matters, earthly and heavenly. Thus [the parties at Wittenberg] believe and teach that with the bread and the wine the body and blood of Christ are truly and substantially present, distributed, and eaten."³⁹

Luther had reacted coolly to Bucer's position and later rejected it. The *Wittenberg Concord* never achieved official status among the Lutherans, since it became clear that Bucer assigned no saving value to the earthly elements in the sacrament. He wished to formulate a position which was capable of contradictory interpretations. The delegates at Sandomierz, however, held the *Wittenberg Concord* in high regard and thought the phrase of Irenaeus to be a sufficient basis from which to move forward.⁴⁰

The *Consensus* states that the delegates agree in the sense of these words in *sententia verborum*. We must ask to what words the Latin phrase in *sententia verborum* refers. One possible interpretation is offered by Jaroslav Pelikan, who in his 1947 translation adds here the words "of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴¹ This suggests that Pelikan thought the delegates were addressing the same point that Luther had asserted in his 1527 treatise *That These Words of Christ, "This Is My Body," . . . Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics*.⁴² Luther began this essay with the statement: "It is perfectly clear, of course, that we are at odds concerning the words of Christ in the Supper," thus indicating that he, Ulrich Zwingli, Andreas Karlstadt (1480-1541), and Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531) had not been able to

³⁸ Irenaeus, "Book IV", in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to 325*, 10 vols., ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 1:484-486.

³⁹ *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1956), 65.

⁴⁰ Luther does not use the Irenaeus quote, but the *Formula of Concord* does in the Solid Declaration Article VIII Paragraph XXII, where it is used to support the doctrine of the communion of the earthly and heavenly elements. *Die Bekenntnisschriften*, 1024.

⁴¹ Pelikan, "The Consensus of Sandomierz," 827.

⁴² LW37:13-150.

agree.⁴³ The *Consensus*, however, says nothing concerning the words of Christ or of their meaning. Instead, it is the words of the fathers and Irenaeus that are central here. The delegates determined not to deal with the question of the interpretation of Christ's words at all, but instead to concentrate on Irenaeus' description of the mystery of the Eucharist. His words proved helpful because of his assertion that the mystery consists of two parts or elements, earthly and heavenly. This fits easily into the pattern of Reformed thought, which separates earthly and heavenly in such a manner that they have no direct mutual relationship.

It is asserted that the elements, according to this understanding, are a sign which is neither bare (*nuda*), nor empty (*vacua*). They deliver and give what they signify to believers who receive them by faith. If we are to understand these words as a statement concerning the presence of Christ in the Supper, we are given no indication of the nature of that presence. No clarification is offered concerning the manner in which Christ is received by those with faith and those without faith. Further, if Christ is present by faith, it is not yet clear what this faith is that makes Christ present. One looks in vain for any clear statement as to the content of the faith by which Christ is made present. Lutheran confessional statements traditionally spoke explicitly as to the content of faith. In this case, one would look for a statement that faith leaves reason behind and clings only to Christ's consecratory words. No further mention is made either of the earthly elements of bread and wine or the heavenly elements of body and blood as such, nor is it made clear what the nature of the relationship is between them. Clearly faith is understood to be the means by which Christ is given and received. This would satisfy the Reformed. Although the pattern of thought in the *Heidelberg Catechism* imitates Luther's definition of the Sacrament of the Altar in his *Small Catechism*, it avoids any identification of the material with the celestial elements.⁴⁴

By way of clarification, the *Consensus* states that the delegates agree they believe and confess that the substantial presence of Christ (*substantialem praesentiam Christi*) is not only signified but is really represented, distributed, and delivered by means of the symbols. These symbols are by no means bare but function according to the nature of sacraments. In other words, Christ is present in a sacramental manner, the definition that the Bohemian Brethren had traditionally preferred and to which Wittenberg reformers had been willing to agree.⁴⁵ This was

⁴³ LW 37:25.

⁴⁴ *Heidelberg Catechism*: Question and Answer 75.

⁴⁵ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 292–293.

acceptable also to the Reformed on the basis of Bullinger's *Second Helvetic Confession* of 1566 which speaks of a sacramental eating.⁴⁶ What was sufficient in 1535, however, was no longer sufficient after the introduction and wide distribution of Calvinistic opinions. In the intervening years, especially after the union of Koźminek in 1555, the sacramental theology of the Bohemian Brethren moved increasingly away from Wittenberg and more closely approached the Calvinist understanding. This made further definition necessary. Here *vere et substantialiter* can no longer carry the weight of full sacramental definition. *Substantialiter* is a philosophical term which is capable of more than one interpretation. It can refer to a heavenly reality toward which the earthly sign points. Here too, the qualification is added that what is offered, distributed, and delivered by means of the symbols is present to those who eat the Supper (*vescentibus*). This is a Reformed qualification over against Lutheran insistence that all who receive, receive what God gives whether for their benefit or judgment.

Such a definition was in itself not satisfactory to the Lutherans. For this reason the Reformed and the Bohemian Brethren allowed that the relevant words concerning the Lord's Supper from Melancthon's *Saxon Confession* of 1551 be added to satisfy the Lutherans and to avoid further controversy. In the *Saxon Confession* we find the following statement with reference to the sacrament:

Also men are taught that sacraments are actions instituted of God, and that without the use whereunto they are ordained the things themselves are not to be accounted for a sacrament; but in the use appointed, Christ is present in this communion, truly and substantially, and the body and blood of Christ is indeed given to the receivers; that Christ does witness that He is in them and does make them His members and that He does wash them in His blood, as Hilary also says, "These things being eaten and drunk do cause both that we may be in Christ and that Christ may be in us". Moreover, in the ceremony itself we observe the usual order of the whole ancient Church, both Latin and Greek. We use no private masses, that is, such wherein the body and blood of Christ is not distributed; as also the ancient Church, for many years after the Apostles' times had no such

⁴⁶ "Besides the higher spiritual eating there is also a sacramental eating of the body of the Lord by which not only spiritually and internally the believer truly participates in the true body and blood of the Lord, but also, by coming to the Table of the Lord, outwardly receives the visible sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord." *Second Helvetic Confession* 1566: Of the Holy Supper of the Lord, Chapter 21.

masses, as the old descriptions which are to be found in Dionysius, Epiphanius, Ambrose, Augustine, and others do show.⁴⁷

This confession states that Christ is truly and substantially present in the Sacrament of the Altar and that his body and blood are delivered to those who receive. The classical words *vere et substantialiter* are used, and the body and blood are said to be delivered to those who receive. Those who receive communion receive Christ. The *Saxon Confession*, however, lacks any specific reference to the bread and wine and the body and blood. Accordingly, it might be asserted that communion is an action instituted by God in which the participants perform a ritual action and receive a spiritual blessing that is not necessarily directly related to it. It was the lack of clarity in this area which occasioned dissention with regard to sacrament within Lutheranism and which made necessary the clarifications found in the *Formula of Concord*. Although the *Saxon Confession* was and remains a provincial document of only limited significance and force produced by a faculty in which some professors had been openly accused of introducing Crypto-Calvinism into the Lutheran Church, the Reformed and Bohemian Brethren at Sandomierz found it imminently suitable for quotation. The Lutherans present may have felt uneasy about the matter but they went along with it.

All three churches had agreed on this paragraph from the *Saxon Confession* because each group was able to see a reflection of its own position in it. The Lutherans, however, understood that the Saxonian definition was insufficient and in need of clarification, especially since little had been said about the relationship of Christ's body and blood to the bread and wine. The precise meaning of the phrase *substantialem praesentiam* was unclear, so they asked that the words *corporis Christi* be added.⁴⁸ The Reformed and Bohemians were unwilling to grant this request; they thought the insertion of the sacramental section from the *Saxon Confession* to be sufficient. In the interest of peace and harmony, the representative parties chose to underline areas of agreement and avoid discussion of divisive issues, as is often the case in modern interchurch dialogues. Blunt questions such as Luther's, "what does the priest put in your mouth," "what do unbelievers receive," and "for what purpose and for what benefit" are avoided for the sake of a declaration of broader unity in the face of political and social pressures.

⁴⁷ Johann Michael Reu, *The Augsburg Confession: A Collection of Sources with an Historical Introduction* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1930), 413-414.

⁴⁸ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 292-293.

The churches decided that they would work together within the parameters set down in the earlier paragraph and agreed to acknowledge as orthodox those churches that accept the terms of this *Consensus* together with "our confession . . . and that of the Brethren. . ."⁴⁹ *Confessionem nostram* could be understood to refer to this *Consensus* document, but careful reading makes it clear that the reference here is to another document.⁵⁰ It is probable that the Reformed added an oblique reference to their *Confession of Sandomierz*⁵¹ at this point, referring to it as *Confessionem nostram, in hac synodo publicatam*. This document was their Sandormirian version of the *Second Helvetic Confession*, whose definition of the sacrament Lutherans found inadequate.

Understanding that the really pertinent questions had not been resolved, the representatives of the churches moved to delay further debate by imposing interdiction on all further debate and "utter silence upon all bickering, disagreement, and controversy."⁵² They promised to persuade their brethren to take the same course of action and deal with each other peaceably and charitably for the good of the fraternal union that had been established. At the same time, the churches promised to use the "utmost zeal" to quash opposition. The delegates pledged themselves to prevail upon all of their brethren to agree to the *Consensus*.

To be effective the *Consensus* needed to be applied, so a program of implementation was detailed. Members of each church were to be encouraged to attend the services of the other churches and to receive the sacraments. Like methods employed by the modern ecumenical movement, it was understood that differences in doctrine and practice will fade only as interchurch activities become commonplace.

Finally, the delegates of each church were to consult together with the other two churches and freely participate in the general synods, so that each church may have input into the discussions and decisions of the other two churches. They pledged themselves to seek this goal and they looked

⁴⁹ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 296.

⁵⁰ This is made clear both by the *et* which precedes the phrase *Confessionem nostram* and the reference to the statement of the Brethren which is included in the same sentence.

⁵¹ *Confession of Sandomierz - Wyznanie wiary powszechnej Kościołów Krześcijańskich* . . . 1570 was published under the supervision of Krzysztof Trecius (Trecy) (†1591), Rector of the Calvinistic gymnasium in Kraków, who played a supervisory role in its composition in the synod of Sandomierz. Jerzy Lehmann *Konfesja, Sandomierska na tle innych konfesji w Polsce XVI Wieku* (Warszawa, 1937), 108–115.

⁵² Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 296.

forward to the day when the churches would work together to assemble and formulate a new and comprehensive body of doctrine which would supersede the confessions of the individual groups. This would finally stop the mouths of evil men and enemies of the truth, and provide great comfort to all the faithful of the churches of the Reformation in Poland, Lithuania, and Samogitia. Forgetting themselves and acting as true ministers of God, all sacredly promised to avoid occasions that might lead to alienation and instead to nurture faith and tranquility. The signers ardently prayed that God, who freed them from the papal tyranny, would be pleased to bless abundantly the unity they achieved.

IV. The Implementation of the *Consensus*

From the start, the Reformed saw the *Consensus* as a great breakthrough and the dawning of new day for interchurch collaboration. They spread the word throughout Europe that they had been able to achieve the goal which Zwingli, Calvin, and the Lutherans had not. They now wished to move ahead and build upon this agreement. In a letter to Hieronim Zanki of Heidelberg, they asserted that it should now be possible to formulate a new Protestant *Corpus Doctrinae* on the basis of the unique accomplishment at Sandomierz. In answer, Zanki expressed his great joy at the formulation of the *Consensus* but noted that in his opinion no further work towards the formulation of a common body of doctrine was necessary.⁵³

Reaction was predictable among the Lutherans. The Wittenberg theological faculty gave the *Consensus*, along with the whole movement toward Protestant union, its blessing.⁵⁴ The leading professors Paul Eber, George Major, and Caspar Peucer (Melanchthon's son-in-law), were strongly influenced by Melanchthon and had been labeled Crypto-Calvinist by more orthodox Lutheran theologians.⁵⁵ The *Consensus* was in line with their ecclesiastical views. At the faculty of theology in Leipzig, the *Consensus* was also accepted with approbation.⁵⁶ Prussian Lutherans, however, were far more critical. They saw that many necessary points

⁵³ Portions of this letter are printed in Николай Любавичъ *Начало католической реакции и упадок реформации в Польше* (Варшава: Типография К. Ковалевского, 1890), 191; Wotschke, *Der Briefwechsel der Schweizer*, 315; Halecki, *Zgoda Sandomierska* 1570, 356.

⁵⁴ Maria Sipayllo, *Opracowała, Akta Synodów różnowierczych w Polsce*. Tom III (Małopolska 1571-1632), (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1983), 128.

⁵⁵ Pelikan, "The Consensus of Sandomierz," 836.

⁵⁶ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów III*, 128.

were not mentioned and they condemned the *Consensus* as inadequate.⁵⁷ Strong criticism also arose in Jena, where many on its theological faculty had left Wittenberg because of its Philippism.⁵⁸

The Roman Catholics were aware of these differences and immediately understood that a united Protestant church was not possible on the basis of the *Consensus*. Cardinal Stanisław Hozjusz, said in his letter of August 31, 1570, to Jakób Uchański, Archbishop of Gniezno, that it would not be possible to persuade all the parties to come to common consent concerning the Lord's Supper.⁵⁹

The Reformed and the Lutherans had very different understandings of what had been achieved. The Reformed claimed that a common agreement had been reached. The Lutherans, however, viewed the *Consensus* as the first step toward the formulation of a common agreement. The Lutherans realized that they had allowed themselves to be put in the position of practicing intercommunion with churches who did not share a common confession concerning the Lord's Supper. They had signed the *Consensus* establishing altar and pulpit fellowship without the doctrinal agreement that such fellowship requires. It is hard to imagine that Lutherans could come forward to receive Christ's body and blood in bread and wine over which his testamentary words (1 Corinthians 11:23-25) had not been spoken in blessing. Unlike the Bohemian Brethren, the Lithuanian Reformed did not use the *Verba Christi* to consecrate the Sacrament. Lithuanian Reformed of the Lasco liturgical tradition included only a historical recitation of the institution of the Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-29) spoken as a Gospel lesson before communion.⁶⁰ There was no notion that the words of Christ consecrate the bread and wine to be what Christ's Words make them, nor did the Lithuanian Reformed have any intention of consecrating bread and wine, in accordance with the Lutheran understanding. To them the Lutheran practice was far too reminiscent of Roman transubstantiation. How then would the Lutherans react to the Reformed manner of observing the Supper? What would they have understood as being given and received—bread and wine, or body and blood? Although the *Consensus of Sandomierz* allows for latitude of

⁵⁷ Любавичъ, *Начало католической реакции*, 193; Lukšaitė, *Reformacija*, 388.

⁵⁸ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów III*, 128.

⁵⁹ Portions of this letter are printed in Любавичъ, *Начало католической реакции*, 191.

⁶⁰ *Forma albo porządek sprawowania świętości Pańskich ... znowu wydana y drukowana w Wylinie. Roku od narodzenia Syna Bożego: 1581, bv.*

interpretation, in actual practice there could be no such breath of interpretation. It had to be one or the other.

The problematic nature of the *Consensus* concerning the Lord's Supper was evident weeks later at the Convocation of Lutherans and Bohemian Brethren at Poznań in May 1570. Many Lutherans were dissatisfied with the lack of clarity in the *Consensus* and sought more precise definitions but some, such as Erasmus Glicner, recognized that any attempt at further definition would destroy the fruits of the work at Sandomierz. The focus was not on further clarification of confession, but the implementation of the *Consensus*. A document was drawn up which spelled out a program of twenty points upon which all three churches must agree. All the points were based on Reformed theology: the Lutherans were asked to agree to Calvinistic proposals. With reference to the Lord's Supper, only the terminology of the *Consensus* and the *Saxon Confession* were to be allowed. Members of the three churches were to be admitted to the communion table if they could provide a letter of membership from their pastor. Under no circumstances were members of these partner churches to proselytize or seek to induce members of another confession. The rites and ceremonies of the consenting churches were to be respected and patrons, such as princes and town councils, were not to require ministers to change rites and ceremonies without the consent of the superior ministers.⁶¹

The adoption of the twenty-point program revealed, first of all, that the leaders had forestalled any discussion concerning the Sacrament of the Altar on the basis of their belief that further discussions would be detrimental to the *Consensus* and destroy the union. Second, the program directed its major attention to agreement on secondary matters. It condemned Roman practices which all desired to eliminate, but among these were some Lutheran practices which the Reformed and Bohemian Brethren did not approve. By the adoption of this program, the Lutherans departed from their traditional practice and moved toward the acceptance of Reformed Protestantism as normative for Polish Protestantism. It would seem, at least in part, that Lasco's vision of co-opting Polish and Lithuanian Lutheranism had been fulfilled.

On the basis of the *Consensus*, the king and parliament regarded the Lutherans, the Reformed, and the Bohemian Brethren as one united Protestant church with full liberty to live and worship according to their beliefs. All three groups began expectantly to prepare for the coming meeting of the Parliament in Warszawa. Few Lutherans and Bohemian

⁶¹ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 309–311.

Brethren attended; Calvinists predominated. When the Calvinists appeared before the parliament to represent the entire Protestant community they did not present the *Consensus of Sandomierz*, but instead substituted their own *Sandomierz Confession*. This greatly diminished the value of the *Consensus*. The bishops and senators rejected the Reformed *Sandomierz Confession* and refused to grant religious liberty on the basis of it.⁶² This made it impossible for the king to give the Protestants what they wanted. The battle for the religious liberty which the Protestants had so earnestly sought from the Parliament was not forthcoming.

When the Lutherans were informed that the Calvinists had presented their *Sandomierz Confession* as representing their view, they were furious. At the Convocation at Poznań on October 4, 1570, they expressed their desire to disassociate themselves from the decisions made at Sandomierz and the subsequent actions of the Calvinists.⁶³ This was the first step among Lutherans to move away from the *Consensus* and in the next thirty years that would gradually reject the *Consensus*. The representatives of the Bohemian Brethren present at Poznań interpreted the action of the Calvinists more calmly, reminding the Lutherans that the churches of the *Consensus of Sandomierz* allowed for each group to retain its own historic confession. They noted that they had no exact record of how the Parliament reacted to the *Consensus*. Even if the Calvinists presented their own confession, they would have been entirely within their rights. The Lutherans did no more than to write a letter to the Reformed congregation in Kraków admonishing them to follow the terms of the *Consensus*.⁶⁴ The Reformed and Bohemian Brethren thought that harmony had been established and that it was now possible to move forward in implementing the *Consensus*.

A general attitude of good feelings seems to have resulted from the approval of the *Consensus* by the general synods at Kraków in 1573, Piotrków in 1578, and Włodzisław in 1583. Even the Lutheran leaders, including Erazm Glicznar, adopted the attitude of the Reformed, who came to regard the *Consensus* as the model which ought to be followed also in Germany. In their letter of 1578, he and Paweł Gilowski, Reformed Superintendent of Kraków, wrote:

A perfect understanding prevails amongst us, notwithstanding that foreign intrigues attempt to destroy the union. Though separated by

⁶² Wotschke, *Reformation in Polen*, 250-251; Halecki, *Zgoda Sandomierska 1570*, 313-314.

⁶³ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 314.

⁶⁴ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 315-316.

minor differences, we compose one body, and one host against Arians and Papists. We wish that the German churches could come to a similar union. It is necessary to convoke a general European Protestant synod, which shall unite all shades of the Reformation into one general confession, and give it a uniform direction.⁶⁵

All was not as it seemed on the surface. The deficiencies of the *Consensus of Sandomierz* were becoming increasingly evident. Although all three churches consented to it, it was clear that no real harmony had been achieved on sacramental teaching. The political situation was such that the deficiencies of the *Consensus* could be overlooked for a time. For the next several years, all three groups determined not to press the matter further in their general synods. Instead, they turned their attention to matters on which all could agree. With the publication of the *Formula of Concord* in 1577, the Lutherans in Poland and Lithuania began to examine the *Consensus* in the light of their church's fuller doctrinal statement on the Sacrament of the Altar. Now they would be forced to choose whether to follow Luther or go to Geneva.

On June 25, 1578, the 48th anniversary of the presentation of the *Augsburg Confession*, the Lutherans in their convocation with the Reformed at Vilnius moved away from their earlier acceptance of the terms of the *Consensus*. During this meeting in Duke Krzysztof Radziwiłł's ("Piorun") palace, they formulated a statement entitled *Concordia Vilnensis* that expressed their dissatisfaction how the *Consensus* had described the nature and purpose of Christ's presence in the Supper.⁶⁶ Although some interpret this as an isolated local action, the position of the Lutheran parish in Vilnius as the bellwether parish of Lithuanian Lutheranism indicated that it had more than merely local significance.

In the same year, tensions concerning the doctrine of the Lord's Supper and Lutheran agreement with the *Consensus of Sandomierz* were

⁶⁵ English translation quoted from Krasinski, *Historical Sketch*, 72.

⁶⁶ The Lutherans were represented by Maciej Dambrowski and Job Sommer (pastors of the Vilnius Lutheran parish), Mikołaj Talwosz, Castellan of Samogitia and others. Included among the Reformed participants were Mikołaj Kantz a Skala, Stanisław Sudrowski (pastor of Vilnius Reformed Parish), Caspar Tarasowski (Superintendent of the Reformed Church), Stanisław Martianus, and Dziewaltowski (Reformed pastor at Deoalte). It is noteworthy that among those present in the convocation was Mikołaj Pac, the former Roman Catholic Bishop of Kiev, who turned toward the Lutheran Church after his earlier allegiance to the Reformed. Andreae Wengerscii, *Libri quatuor Slavoniae Reformatae* (Amstelodami, 1679), 80–81; Jablonski, *Historia Consensus*, 81–86; Adamowicz, *Kościół augsburski*, 54.

beginning to become evident in Poznań.⁶⁷ A few years later, in 1582, Paweł Gericius, the Lutheran pastor in Poznań and Jan Enoch came out in opposition to the *Consensus*, mainly because of its eucharistic doctrine.⁶⁸ This action made it necessary for Duke Radziwiłł, Palatine of Vilnius and Hetman of Lithuania, to make an attempt at reconciliation. Radziwiłł convoked a Colloquium in Vilnius on June 14, 1585.⁶⁹ Andreas Volanus, speaking for the Reformed, made the Lord's Supper the central subject. He stated that pressures from the forces of the Roman church made it most desirable that Lutherans and Reformed should form a common opinion. He declared that this could best be accomplished by laying aside the relatively recent works of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Oecolampadius, and all other human authorities, except those of ancient fathers.⁷⁰ Volanus built his arguments upon his careful distinction between earthly and heavenly things, after the manner of the distinction between the *signa* and *res signata* (basically a Neo-Platonist argument). He alluded to evangelical confessions from other countries, all of which clearly were built upon the same philosophical foundations. He spoke of the true gift of the body and blood of Christ, but he did not equate it with the physical eating of the external elements.⁷¹ While using terminology which Lutherans employ in speaking of the sacramental gifts, he did not connect the heavenly gifts to the consecrated bread and wine in a manner acceptable to the Lutherans, as can be seen in his own words:

We believe and acknowledge that when the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is distributed to the believers

⁶⁷ Maria Sipayłło, Opracowała, *Akta Synodów różnowierczych w Polsce* Tom IV (Wielkopolska 1569–1632), (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1997), 49.

⁶⁸ Sipayłło, *Akta Synodów IV*, 73.

⁶⁹ Among the Lutherans participating in this meeting were Paul Weiss (professor of Divinity in Königsberg), Martin Henrici, Job Sommer (Lutheran pastor of Vilnius), Paul Oderborn (Lutheran Pastor of Kaunas), George Plotkowski (later served a Lithuanian parish in ŠiaulėnaiIngė Lukšaitė). *Die reformatorischen Kirchen Litauens: Die Evangelische Kirchen Litauens*, (Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1998), 108 n.255. The Reformed representatives included Duke Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Stanisław Naruszewicz, Castellian of Mińsk, Andreas Zawisza (*tribunallasessor*), Jan Abramowicz, Starosta of Lida, and Reformed theologians Stanisław Sudrowski (Latin: Sudrovius), Johann Ulrich, Mathias Johannides, Andreas Chrzastowski, and Andreas Volanus (an eminent theologian and secretary of the King). Joseph Łukaszewicz, *Geschichte der reformierten Kirchen in Litauen*. T. I. (Leipzig: Dyk, 1848), 36.

⁷⁰ *Colloquium habitum Vilnae in palatio Illustriss[imi] ac Mag[ni] Du[cis] D[omini] Christophori Radiuili in Birtza et Tubinga Ducis, Palatini Vilnensi, die 14. Iunii. Anno 1585.* (Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel. Call No.: Cod. Guelf. 11. 14 Aug. 2°), 265–279.

⁷¹ *Colloquium habitum Vilnae 1585*, 265–279.

according to his institution, the bread is his body and the wine is his blood, not by an exterior and invisible transformation of elements into heavenly and visible things, but by the real and true gift of the body and blood of Christ, in such a manner that those who, being endowed by the grace of God with true faith and repentance, receive with the mouth the external elements, are partaking at the same time with the spirit and faith of the body and blood of Christ, to the certain remission of sins and the gift of eternal life, which is obtained by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁷²

Lutherans objected strongly to this omission and that Volanus had not spoken to the question of unworthy reception of the sacrament. The Vilnius meeting revealed how the Lutherans and Reformed became entrenched in their traditional sacramental teachings. The Lutherans insisted that careful attention be paid to the words of Christ without resort to rationalistic interpretations. Whereas the Reformed insisted that rational philosophical principles be included in the teaching of the Lord's Supper. The Vilnius Convocation ended without any real advance.⁷³

Relationships between the churches in both Poland and Lithuania were put under increasing strain. It became evident that the *Consensus of Sandomierz* could not carry the weight in future discussions. Paweł Gericius, for example, was unwilling to compromise on any point. Although Lutheran Church officials tried to mute the effect of his arguments, his position was increasingly supported among the Lutheran clergy and parishioners. In addition, his position had the support of prominent Lutheran theologians in Germany. These formidable opinions led Superintendent Erazm Gliczner to reevaluate his support for the *Consensus*. As a result, he published the *Unaltered Augsburg Confession* of 1530 in the Polish language in 1594 to the chagrin of Reformed and the Bohemian Brethren.⁷⁴

It had become evident that serious steps needed to be taken to preserve the unity that the *Consensus* had supposedly established among Protestants. A general synod was called to meet at Toruń during August of 1595 to address this and other issues. Świętosław Orzelski, the chairman of

⁷² *Brevis et perspicua Conclusio colloquij Instituti Vilnae ab Illustrissimo principe et M. D. palatino Vilnensi, die 14. Iun[ii] Anno 1585.* (Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel. Call No.: Cod. Guelf. 11. 14 Aug. 2°), 262; English translation quoted from Krasiński, *Historical Sketch*, 84.

⁷³ Łukaszewisz, *Geschichte der reformierten*, 36–37; Lukšaitė, *Reformacija*, 483.

⁷⁴ Wojciech Adam Sławiński, *Toruński synod generalny 1595 roku* (Warszawa, 2002), 105.

the synod, declared that the meeting was for the purpose of renewing, conforming, and consolidating the *Consensus of Sandomierz*, as well as to determine how the Polish Protestants could avoid the injuries and persecutions that they were suffering, especially from the Jesuits. Gericius, the Lutheran pastor in Poznań, immediately objected to the manner in which theological issues in the *Consensus* were to be discussed, stating that contradictory theological statements in the *Consensus* must be resolved.⁷⁵ Orzelski replied that it was common knowledge that Lutherans, Bohemians, and Reformed had theological differences, but these were not reasons for setting aside the *Consensus*. Gericius pointed out that Andreas Volanus, in his reply to the Jesuit Piotr Skarga, had stated that the *Consensus of Sandomierz* denied the presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the sacrament, and the same denial could be found in the catechism of Paweł Gilowski.⁷⁶ In an effort to turn the discussion away from the doctrinal matters, Krzysztof Rej, the Chamberlain of Lublin, stated that the synod had gathered not to discuss the doctrinal issues of the Lord's Supper but to strengthen the unity achieved at Sandomierz. Superintendent Glicznier insisted that the doctrinal issues must be faced because many adherents to the Helvetian Confession were destroying the *Consensus* by their teachings and writings. Attention turned to attempts to force Gericius to sign the *Consensus*. He left the city rather than subject himself to such pressure. In order to quiet his opposition to Superintendent Glicznier, it was resolved to excommunicate Gericius should he fail to repent before the end of the year.⁷⁷ He did not repent. When Glicznier was instructed to carry out the decision of the synod to depose Gericius for continually preaching against the *Consensus*, the strong reaction of the Poznań congregation moved Glicznier to abandon the action for fear of violence.⁷⁸

The General Synod of Toruń had resolved to accept the *Consensus of Sandomierz* and require that every minister in the Polish kingdom conform himself to its provisions. It was further resolved that no one should be made a minister unless he signed the *Consensus* and conform to it. The senior of every district was to keep a book in which all ministers of his district recorded their agreement. Every year the superintendents of the three confessions were to meet in order to deliberate concerning affairs of

⁷⁵ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów III*, 122–123.

⁷⁶ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów III*, 124 fn. 2.

⁷⁷ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów III*, 153; The decree of Paweł Gericius' excommunication is cited in Łukaszewicz, *O kościołach Braci Czeskich*, 161–162.

⁷⁸ Krasiński, *Historical Sketch*, 130.

the church. Churches had the liberty to maintain their traditional ceremonies until a future synod established conformity.⁷⁹

The General Synod at Toruń was the last time the Lutherans reaffirmed the *Consensus of Sandomierz*. In the 17th century, Lutheran officials began to declare openly that they no longer supported the *Consensus*, because it did not provide a basis for solid and enduring unity among the Protestant churches.⁸⁰ The clarity of Lutheran confession seen in the publication of the *Formula of Concord* and the entire *Book of Concord* was such that Lutherans had come to the inevitable conclusion that the *Consensus* was inadequate. As confessionalism grew among Lutherans, support for the *Consensus* waned and it was most clearly repudiated at the *Colloquium Charitativum* in 1645, when the Lutherans refused to make common cause with the Reformed and Bohemian Brethren before the Polish monarch.⁸¹ On the basis of a commonly held opinion of that era, the Lutherans refused even to engage in common prayer with the Roman Catholics, Reformed, and Bohemian Brethren, because in colloquium they shared no common confessional position.⁸² From the standpoint of the Reformed, however, the *Consensus* was and would remain the crowning achievement of a decade of struggle to establish Reformed sacramental doctrine. The Lithuanian Reformed church regards the *Consensus of Sandomierz* as the definitive confessional document for understanding their relationship to the Lutherans even to this day.

V. Conclusions

Like every document of its time, the *Consensus of Sandomierz* was formulated to meet a need. Protestants thought that it was only by a show of unity that they would be able to obtain official recognition of the king and parliament in both Poland and Lithuania. In addition, it would indicate to the people of both nations that their churches were not simply minority sects but the true church of Christ, deserving of equal status with the Roman majority church.

Theological examination of the *Consensus of Sandomierz* reveals that it was not a church union document in the usual sense of the term. To speak of religious union in the 16th century was to speak of agreement in all articles of faith, including those previously controverted. We see this in the

⁷⁹ Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów III*, 166.

⁸⁰ Henryk Gmiterek, *Bracia czescy a kalwini w Rzeczypospolitej. Połowa XVI-połowa XVII wieku* (Lublin: Pektor, 1987), 204 fn. 11.

⁸¹ Łukaszewicz, *O kościołach Braci Czeskich*, 212–213.

⁸² Łukaszewicz, *O kościołach Braci Czeskich*, 220.

case of the Augsburg Diet of 1530. Mutual agreement in doctrine and practice was required of those who signed the *Augsburg Confession*. Those who could not agree on all articles were considered to be outside the terms of agreement. From this perspective the document produced at Sandomierz did not produce a religious union because common confession was not formulated. Instead of searching for solutions to controverted issues, it chose rather to speak only of matters in which there was apparent agreement. It might even be asked whether this was a theological statement at all, because little was said about doctrinal definition. Theological concerns appear in only one paragraph, and then only superficially. It might be better described as a preliminary statement of consensus and mutual cooperation towards the eventual achievement of complete agreement.

From another perspective, one may regard the *Consensus* as a statement of formal ecclesiastical union on the basis of the fact that it did establish altar and pulpit fellowship among the signatory churches. It was on this basis that Reformed theologians and some later historians have continued to regard the *Consensus* as a statement of religious union. Such is clearly the view of the Polish Reformed historian Krasieński and Prussian Union Church historian Wotschke. They do not give attention, however, to the fact that the fellowship established by this document lacked the necessary theological agreement.

The fact that Polish and Lithuanian Lutherans at that time would indicate a willingness to allow parishioners and clergy of another confession to commune at their altars and preach from their pulpits would be regarded by other Lutherans of the same period as a serious weakness and departure from Lutheran teaching and practice. No doubt they understood themselves to be acting on the basis of sound advice from the Wittenberg faculty in which a very congenial attitude toward Calvinism had developed. Lutheran confessionalism was beginning to grow during this period, but by 1570 it had influenced only a few pastors and theologians in Poland and Lithuania. By the end of this decade, the influence of Lutheran confessionalism in these countries strengthened to the point that the Lutherans adopted the position that there could be no pulpit and altar fellowship without complete doctrinal agreement. This position is evident in the 1645 *Colloquium charitativum*.

The *Consensus* was not without some positive results, especially in the Reformed liturgies of the late 16th and early 17th centuries. During this period, Reformed worship was greatly enriched by the introduction of traditional forms and practices which the Lutherans had kept. The

Reformed hoped that this would open the door to a common liturgy to be used in both the Reformed and Lutheran Churches.

The pressing political needs of the time explain the willingness of the three main Protestant bodies to participate and sign the *Consensus*. The churches were fighting for their lives in the face of the Counter-Reformation and the growing Jesuit offensive, and they decided to take seriously the king's proposal that his Protestant subjects should unite in one Protestant church. From this perspective, historians should not talk about the *Consensus* as a true religious union. The verdict of Polish historian Józef Szujski that the *Consensus of Sandomierz* brought about primarily a political union is correct.⁸³

Appendix

The Consensus of Sandomierz Formula of Recessus⁸⁴

Mutual consensus in the chief articles of the Christian religion between the churches of Major and Minor Poland, Russia, Lithuania, and Samogitia concerning which there appeared to be descent in the *Augsburg Confession* and that of the Valdensians (as they are called) and the Swiss, concluded in the synod of Sandomierz April 14, 1570.

Since, after many long conflicts with sectarians, Tritheites, Ebionites, and Anabaptists, we have nevertheless emerged, by the grace of God, from so many great struggles and deplorable contentions, it was decided by those Reformed and Orthodox churches of Poland which seemed to the enemies of the truth and of the Gospel to be in least agreement in certain articles and formulas of doctrine to call a Synod in the interest of peace and concord and to attest their mutual consensus. Therefore, after a friendly and Christian conference, we agree to these articles with minds thus joined and agreed.

First. As both we who in the present Synod have published our confession and the Bohemian Brethren have never believed that those who adhere to the *Augsburg Confession* feel otherwise than piously and orthodoxy about God and the Holy Trinity, also the incarnation of the Son of God and our justification and other principal articles of our faith; so also those who follow the *Augsburg Confession* have openly and sincerely confessed that they, on the other hand, know of nothing in the confession of our churches or that of the Bohemian Brethren concerning God and the Holy Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, justification, and other primary articles of the Christian faith which would be contrary to the orthodox

⁸³ Szujski, *Dzieje Polski*, 399.

⁸⁴ Latin text of the *Consensus of Sandomierz*: Sipayllo, *Akta Synodów II*, 295–298. The English translation is from Pelikan, "The Consensus of Sandomierz," 826–830. The translation in the first paragraph and footnoted editorial comments are by Charles Evanson and Darius Petkunas.

truth and the pure Word of God. And there we have mutually and unanimously promised according to the rule of God's Word that we shall defend this mutual consensus in the true and pure religion of Christ against papists, against sectarians, against all the enemies of the Gospel and the truth.

Moreover, as far as the unfortunate difference of opinion on the Lord's Supper is concerned, we agree on the meaning of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ⁸⁵, as they have been orthodoxly⁸⁶ understood by the fathers, and especially by Irenaeus, who said that this mystery consists of two elements, namely, an earthly and a heavenly one. Nor do we assert that those elements or signs are bare and empty; we state, rather, that at the same time by faith they actually [*re ipsa*] exhibit and present that which they signify. Finally, to put it more clearly and expressly, we have agreed to believe and confess that the substantial presence of Christ is not merely signified, but that the body and blood of the Lord⁸⁷ are represented, distributed, and exhibited to those who eat by the symbols applied to the thing itself, and that the symbols are not at all bare, according to the nature of the Sacraments. But lest the diversity of manners of speaking bring forth another controversy, we have decided by mutual consent, in addition to the article which is inserted into our Confession, to add the article of the *Confession of the Saxon churches* on the Lord's Supper, sent to the Council of Trent in 1551, which we acknowledge as correct and have accepted. These are the words of that Confession: *Baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs*, etc.⁸⁸

We have decided to be bound by this holy and mutual consensus, and have agreed that just as they regard us, our churches, our confession published in this Synod, and that of the Brethren as orthodox, so also we shall treat their churches with the same Christian love and acknowledge them as orthodox. We shall avoid the extreme and impose utter silence upon all bickering, disagreement, and controversy by which the course of the Gospel is impeded to the great offense, of many pious people, and from which there comes a severe calumny by our adversaries and contradiction to our true Christian religion. Rather let the occasion be provided to strive for public peace and tranquility, to exercise mutual charity; we should also offer our labors for the building up of the church in our fraternal union.

For this reason we have agreed by mutual consent to persuade all our brethren with utmost zeal and to invite them to increase, build up, and conserve this Christian and unanimous Consensus, to nourish it and testify to it, especially by the hearing of the Word (by attending the services first of one, then of another of the confessions) and the use of the Sacraments, observing the proper order and manner of the discipline and custom of each church.

We leave the rites and ceremonies of each church free by this concord. For it

⁸⁵ "...of our Lord Jesus Christ" are not in the Latin text.

⁸⁶ "In an orthodox manner."

⁸⁷ "...that the body and blood of the Lord" are not in the Latin text.

⁸⁸ "...and to this end the words this article are included" are not in the English text.

does not matter much what rites are observed, as long as the doctrine itself and the foundation of our faith and salvation are kept intact and incorrupt. So the *Augsburg Confession* itself and the *Saxon Confession* teach on this matter; and in this our Confession published in this Synod of Sandomierz we have expressed the same thing. We have therefore promised and decided to compare counsels and works of charity among ourselves, and in the future to consult about the conservation and growth of all the pious, orthodox, and Reformed Churches' of the entire realm of Lithuania and Samogitia, as well as [the formation of] one body.

And if they ever hold general synods, let them inform us; and when called to our general synods, let them feel free to come.⁸⁹

And to put a colophon to this consensus and mutual concord, we do not think it would be inappropriate for the saving and assuring of this fraternal society to gather in a certain place, where, forced to this by improbity of the enemies of truth, we would draw up a compend of the body of doctrine (one out of the several Confessions) and publish it, that the mouths of evil men may be stopped to the great comfort of all the faithful in the name of all the Polish, Lithuanian, and Samogitian Reformed Churches which agree with our confession.

Having given and joined our right hands, therefore, we have sacredly promised and mutually agreed that we want to build up and nurture faith and peace and to strive more and more for the building of the kingdom of God, avoiding all occasions for the alienation of the churches. Finally, we agree that unmindful and forgetful of ourselves, as is proper for true ministers of God, we shall promote the glory solely of Jesus Christ our Savior and contend for the truth of His Gospel in word and deed.

That this might be fixed sure and firm forever we pray with ardent petitions to God the Father, the Author and abundant Fountain of all consolation and peace, who rescued our churches from the morass of the Papacy and endowed us with the pure and holy light of His Word. May He deign to bless this our holy peace, consensus, conjunction, and union to the glory of His name and the building up of the Church. Amen.

[The names of those who subscribed to the *Consensus* follow.]

⁸⁹ "...if it would be beneficial" are not in the English text.

Relating to Other Christians Charitably and Confessionally

Samuel H. Nafzger

"Church Fellowship," "Inter-Church Relations," and "Inter-Christian Relationships" are not synonymous terms. They overlap, but are not identical. Right at the outset, my understanding is that I have been invited to talk to you about inter-Christian relationships in the broadest sense of this designation and not in the first instance, at least, about church fellowship or inter-church relations. The focus of my comments in this presentation, therefore, will be on "Relating," on relating "Charitably," and on relating "Confessionally" with other Christians. Of course, inter-church relations and altar and pulpit fellowship are forms of inter-Christian relationships, but when we talk about inter-Christian relationships, we are talking about so much more than church fellowship. I should also like to say right at the beginning that it is also my contention that it is not possible to talk helpfully about "relationships" between Christians without saying something about what the church is. Only when we do this can we profitably talk about "Relating to Other Christians Charitably and Confessionally," (i.e., in faithfulness to God's Word, the Holy Scriptures, and the Lutheran Confessions). First of all, therefore, I want to say a few words about the Lutheran understanding of the doctrine of the church. Then, on this basis, I shall present five general theses on "Relating to Other Christians Charitably and Confessionally."

I. The Church

"Thank God," says Martin Luther in the Smalcald Articles, "a seven-year old child knows what the church is" (SA III, XII, 2). This may have been true in Luther's day, but one would never come to this conclusion on the basis of the way the term "church" is used today in our society at large, in Christendom, or even on the basis of the many different ways this word is frequently used in our own Missouri Synod circles. The *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, for example, published an article a few years ago titled "The Gospel According to Hollywood" by Sara Miller. In this article, Ms. Miller presented a review of Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ." She writes:

This film and Gibson have been taken up enthusiastically by evangelical and fundamentalist Christians which is interesting in view of Gibson's view. They're not going to heaven. "There is no salvation for those outside

Samuel H. Nafzger is Director of Church Relations, Assistant to the President, The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, St. Louis, Missouri.

the (Roman Catholic) Church," (Gibson) told an interviewer for *The New Yorker*, adding that his own wife wouldn't be saved because she's an Episcopalian. "That is a pronouncement from the chair. I go with it," said Gibson.¹

Gibson, to be fair, is not quite accurate here with respect to what he says about the position of the Roman Catholic Church, although it is understandable how he could come to the conclusion that "that is a pronouncement from the chair. I go with it." While the Roman Catholic Church concedes that non-Catholics may be saved, Rome does identify the church properly speaking with itself. Karl Rahner, writing in 1963, states:

Since the visibleness and visible unity of the church are constituted by the sacramental and juridical authority of the church (which later includes in its turn the teaching and ruling authority of the church), all and only those belong to the Church as members who are visibly, i.e., in the external forum, subject to these two powers of the church. And everyone who, on the social plane, is cut or has withdrawn himself from one or both of these powers, is not a member of the Church.²

This claim for the Roman Catholic Church was reaffirmed in *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Churches*, issued by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

. . . the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery are not churches in the proper sense (par. 17).³

This view, of course, excludes Lutherans from the church "in the proper sense." This position was reaffirmed by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007 when he stated that "Christ established here on earth only one Church," the Catholic Church. Other communities, this statement continued, "can not be called 'churches' in the proper sense" because they do not have apostolic succession. As Pope John Paul stated in *Lumen Gentium*,

. . . the one Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church. The Decree of Ecumenism emphasizes the presence in her of the fullness ("plentitudo") of the means of salvation. Full unity comes about when all share in the fullness of the means of salvation entrusted by Christ to his Church (par. 86).⁴

¹ *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, February 29, 2004.

² Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol II, 1963, 17.

³ Declaration "Dominus Iesus" on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Churches, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html.

⁴ *Ut unum sint*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/

On July 11, 2007, the day after Pope Benedict XVI issued his statement, titled "Responses to Some Questioning Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine of the Church," Cardinal Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, issued this clarification:

The document does not say that the Protestant churches are not churches, but that they are not churches in the precise sense, that is, they are not churches in the way that the Catholic church uses the term church.⁵

Kasper continued, saying all Christians must recognize that:

at the basis of dialogue there is not just that which divides us, but that which unites us and that is greater than what divides. For that reason, one should not skim over what the declaration affirms in a positive way about the Protestant churches, and that is that Jesus Christ is effectively present in them for the salvation of their members. This document renders a service to clarity ...

But does it really contribute to clarity? What Kasper seems to be saying here is that Protestants are Christians and they will go to heaven—but that they are not members of the church, precisely speaking, here on earth, which is the Roman Catholic Church.

This is exactly what was implied in the service bulletin for the ecumenical service led by Pope Benedict XVI in April 2008 in the Church of Saint Joseph in New York City with the inclusion of the following quotation:

Among Christians, fraternity is not just a vague sentiment . . . it is grounded in the supernatural reality of the one Baptism which makes us all members of the one Body of Christ.⁶

This statement seems to indicate that the baptized are all members of the Body of Christ, yet they are not all members of the church, properly speaking. But does this then mean that there is salvation outside of the church? One thing is clear, however. According to Rome's official teaching, the church properly speaking is to be identified only with the Roman Catholic Church.

documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html.

⁵ Quoted in the *National Catholic Reporter* in "Protestants Shrug at 'One True Church' Statement," July 20, 2007.

⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, Ecumenical Meeting, XX World Youth Day, 2005.

When I noted this point in my October 2003 article, "Syncretism and Unionism" in *Concordia Journal* (July 2003), I received an e-mail from a well-known LCMS professor which stated:

... I read and profited from your piece on *Ut Unum Sint*, just out in the *Concordia Journal*. But here's a question for you that I've wondered about on occasion and was triggered for me again by your concluding critique: could not roughly the same critique be offered of our church's belief that it is "the true visible church"? I've wondered about this over the years. I'd say that the LCMS ecclesiology is very analogous to Roman Catholic ecclesiology—except, of course, that it's a little easier to pull off when you're their size than when you're ours!⁷

But this is not what Walther and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) say, as I wrote back to him. Walther clearly recognizes that heterodox church bodies such as the Reformed churches are true visible churches, albeit in a qualified sense.⁸ I have been a member of the National Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission for the past 25 years, at the request of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR). I am a member of its Standing Committee on Full Communion. In the course of a most interesting session a couple of years ago on recognition of ministries and sacramental acts, the dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary, informed our committee that the (Russian) Orthodox Church recognized as valid only those baptisms administered by "the church," i.e., the Orthodox Church. "Does this mean," I asked, "should I as a Lutheran decide to join the Russian Orthodox Church that I would have to be re-baptized?" "No," he responded, "You would have to be baptized!"

Later, during the break, he shared with me the elation at St. Vladimir's Seminary to have former Missouri Synod Lutheran pastor and theologian, Jaroslav Pelikan, serving in their midst. Upon being told this, I could not resist the temptation to ask him how Professor Pelikan's baptism had gone. His response was: "In his case, we chose to recognize his baptism on the basis of what we refer to as the principle of *economia*, although we would not normally do this." Like the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodoxy identifies the church, properly speaking, with a visible institution, the Orthodox Church.

The least we can say about such views is that this is not relating to other Christians "Charitably and Confessionally" as Lutherans understand these terms. If we Missouri Synod Lutherans are going to relate to other

⁷ Letter on file.

⁸ C.F.W. Walther, "Communion Fellowship," in *Essays for the Church*, I, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 203.

Christians "Charitably and Confessionally," then we need to take a look at what the Lutheran Confessions, which we accept *because (quia)* they correctly interpret the Holy Scriptures, have to say about the doctrine of the church. It is on the basis of what the church is that we must talk about what it means to relate to other Christians charitably and confessionally.

What is the understanding of the church as presented in the *Book of Concord*? The "one Holy Christian church," says Melancthon, is "the assembly of all believers" (German), "the assembly of saints" (Latin, AC VII, 1). It is "a spiritual people . . . reborn by the Holy Spirit" (Ap VII & VIII, 14). Martin Luther writes that the church is "a little holy flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ" (LC II, 51), that it is "holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd (SA III, XII, 2). In so describing the church, the Lutheran Confessions seek to be faithful to the understanding of the church confessed in the Apostles' Creed as "the holy Christian church, the communion of saints," and in the Nicene Creed as "one holy, Christian and apostolic Church." There is only one church, if we speak precisely, and it can not be identified with **any** external institution.

To make this clear, the Lutheran Confessions also say what the church is not. Unlike the Roman Catholic understanding of the church, the Reformers expressly reject the understanding of the church as consisting of those who professed the Christian faith and who were also under the rule of legitimate pastors and the Roman Pope; in other words, they rejected the traditional Roman Catholic view that the church is essentially a visible, tangible, entity. Seventeenth century Roman Catholic theologian Robert Bellarmine, for example, writes in his influential *Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae* (1615): "The church is an assembly of men, an assembly which is visible and perceptible to the senses just like an assembly of the Roman citizenry, or the kingdom of France or the Republic of Venice."⁹

The Lutheran confessors disagreed with this understanding of the nature of the church. They argue that arrogant people and hypocrites, while in the church, are *not* in actuality a genuine part of it. This conviction leads them to make a **critically important distinction between the church properly speaking (*proprie dicta*) and the church broadly speaking (*late***

⁹ Bellarmino, Roberto Francesco Romolo, and Vitus Erbermann, *Roberti Bellarmini ... Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei adversus hujus temporis haereticos: accedunt Viti Erbermanni ... Vindiciae Bellarminianae contra Guilielmum Amesium & Joannem Gerhardum* (Moguntiae: Sumptibus Kirchhemii, Schotti & Thielmanni, 1842), 982.

dicta). Melanchthon, responding to the *Confutation's* condemnation of AC VII and its identification of the church as the assembly of saints, writes:

We concede that in this life hypocrites and evil men are mingled with the church and are members of the church according to the outward associations of the church's marks—that is, Word, confession, and sacraments. The sacraments do not lose their efficacy when they are administered by evil men (Ap VII and VIII, 3).

This does not mean, Melanchthon continues, that “the church is merely an association of outward ties and rites like other civic governments.” On the contrary, the church, he continues, “is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit *in men's hearts*” (Ap VII and VIII, 5). Referring to the Apostles' Creed, Melanchthon says:

Certainly the wicked are not a holy church! The following phrase, “the communion of saints,” seems to have been added to explain what “church” means, namely, the assembly of saints who share the association of the same Gospel or teaching and of the same Holy Spirit, who renews, consecrates, and governs their hearts (Ap VII and VIII, 8).

Lest he be misunderstood, he repeats:

Hypocrites and evil men are indeed associated with the true church as far as outward ceremonies are concerned. But when we come to define the church, we must define that which is the living body of Christ and is the church in fact as well as in name. We must understand what it is that chiefly makes us members, and living members of the church. If we were to define the church as only an outward organization embracing both the good and the wicked, then men would not understand that the kingdom of Christ is the righteousness of the heart and the gift of the Holy Spirit but would think of it as only the outward observance of certain devotions and rituals (Ap VII and VIII, 12-13).

In other words, Melanchthon clearly rejects the identification of the church with an external institution. He distinguishes between the *una sancta*, which is the church properly speaking, and the local and territorial entities with their rites, orders, and external membership, which is the church broadly speaking. Martin Luther makes the same distinction when he says: “Just as the rock [Christ] is without sin, invisible and spiritual, so the church which is without sin, must be invisible and spiritual, and is grasped only by faith” (WA, 710).

This does not mean, however, that the Lutheran confessors regarded the church as some kind of Platonic republic: “This church actually exists,” says Melanchthon in the Apology. It is “made up of true believers and righteous men scattered throughout the world.” And while this church, properly speaking, is hidden from human eyes, we know where it is to be

found because of the “marks” of the church, namely, “the pure teaching of the Gospel and the sacraments” (Ap VII and VIII, 20). God’s Word, we can be absolutely certain, never returns void. The church, properly speaking, will always be present wherever the gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered. Baptism, we Lutherans confess, makes us members of the one holy Christian church on earth, members of the Body of Christ, and we recognize the validity of baptisms performed in other Christian churches, such as, the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and even Baptist churches.

This understanding of the church has enormous implications for how we are to understand the topic of inter-Christian relationships. As we have seen, the Lutheran Confessions distinguish between the church properly speaking and the church broadly speaking. This is a critically important presupposition for how we are to go about relating to other Christians “Charitably and Confessionally.” The true sphere of inter-Christian relationships is the church in the proper sense. But since the church in the strict sense has not yet been revealed (Ap VII and VIII), it is within the external, visible structures of the church in the broad sense as it actually exists in the world that inter-Christian relationships actually take place.

This fundamental distinction between the church properly speaking and the understanding of the church broadly speaking, which is so clearly articulated by the Lutheran Confessions, is succinctly summarized in *The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship*¹⁰ in these words:

While the church’s internal unity is perfect and known only to God (Eph. 1:4), the limits of external fellowship are determined by whether the Gospel is preached purely and the sacraments are administered according to Christ’s institution. The Gospel and the Sacraments are in themselves always pure. In this way they create and preserve the church in her hidden unity throughout the world. Yet, when church bodies make public confession of the Gospel and the sacraments, tragically some obscure or explicitly contradict the teachings of the Gospel and the proper administration of the sacraments.¹¹

The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship describes such a situation:

¹⁰ It was prepared by the CTCR and President Barry and commended by the 2001 Synodical Convention for “continued use and guidance” in the Synod.

¹¹ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), *The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2000), 5

When a person receives a trinitarian Baptism in a Reformed congregation (such as a Baptist church), that Baptism is valid and true. Tragically, however, Baptist doctrine explicitly rejects the biblical teaching that Baptism brings the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins.¹²

As Robert Preus has pointed out, "The Word does not cease being a mark when it is for some reason not taught in its truth and purity. . . . This seems to be what Melanchthon is saying throughout [CA] Article VII."¹³

The one, holy, Christian church as it manifests itself in this world in time is frequently divided, rent by division and schism. This fundamental distinction about the understanding of the nature of the church lies at the heart of the understanding of the doctrine of the church in the Lutheran Confessions, and it is important that we keep it in view as we talk about the topic of relating to other Christians "Charitably and Confessionally." What is important for us here today is that the understanding of the church presented in the Lutheran Confessions clearly means that inter-Christian relationships exist beyond the confines of what we refer to as church fellowship (altar and pulpit fellowship). This is precisely the topic I have been asked to address at this convocation. All those who have been made members of the one Body of Christ by word and sacrament are related to one another.

There are, according to the most recent accounts of demographers, a little over six billion people on planet earth as we begin the 21st century. Approximately one-third of these people may be classified in some sense as Christian, as belonging to the church broadly speaking. Of these 2 billion Christians, 51.5% (1.03 billion) belong to the Roman Catholic Church and 11.2% (240 million) belong to the Orthodox communion. Anglicans (75 million) and Lutherans (69.7 million) each claim 3%. The remaining 31% of the world's Christians, at least according to David Barrett's 2001 edition of his *World Christian Encyclopedia*, belong to 34,000+ different Christian denominations. This figure represents a 39% increase in new church bodies during the past 20 years. According to these figures, 660 new churches come into existence every year or about two per day.

Christians today find themselves in a variety of inter-Christian relationships: relationships between churches in church fellowship, inter-church relationships, and inter-Christian relationships. Church fellowship

¹² CTCR, *The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship*, 17, n 5.

¹³ Robert Preus, "The Basis for Concord" in *Formula of Concord: Essays* (St. Louis: Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1977), 18, n 11.

is one—and only one—very important relationship between Christian churches in doctrinal agreement with each other, but there are also relationships between Christian denominations not in complete confessional agreement, and also relationships within and between Christians belonging to such churches.

II. Five Theses on Relating to Other Christians Charitably and Confessionally

The principles of fellowship presented in the Scriptures and confessed in the *Book of Concord* are normative for confessional Lutherans as they relate to other Christians. There is not one set of scriptural principles for church fellowship, another set of scriptural principles for inter-church relations, and another for inter-Christian relationships.¹⁴ In what follows, I shall present five theses focusing on what the scriptural principles of fellowship have to say about inter-Christian relationships in general.

1. *The Scriptures teach that Christians are to relate to one another charitably and confessionally.*

The CTCR, in its 1981 report, *The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship*, lists nine "Scriptural Principles of Fellowship." Principles four and five discuss the relationship that exists between "charitably" and "confessionally" under the terms "the truth principle" and "the love principle."

On the one hand, justification comes before sanctification. As the CTCR puts it:

Apart from faith in the Gospel, there can be no good works. But when the Holy Spirit is given through faith, the heart is moved to do good works. In the same way that faith precedes good works, it is proper and necessary to speak of the priority of the truth of the Gospel over love.

In other words, when it comes to relating to other Christians, there is a sense in which "confessionally" helps to define "charitably." It is *never charitable* to relate to other Christians at the expense of the truth of the gospel. It is never "loving" to relate to other Christians if this involves a compromise of the gospel, whether it be relationships between "church bodies" or relationships between individual Christians, whether it be between individual Christians within one denomination, between

¹⁴ The Commission on Theology and Church Relations list nine such principles in its 1981 report *The Nature and Implications of the concept of Fellowship*, 13-16.

Christians belonging to different church bodies in altar and pulpit fellowship with each other, or between Christians belonging to church bodies not in agreement in doctrine. Compromising the truth of the gospel can never be called "charitable."

At the same time, as the CTCR says in Principle five, love heads the list of "the fruit of the Spirit. Love always seeks the edification of the members of the Body of Christ." The Commission continues:

Love, which is a response to the Gospel, stands uppermost in the realm of sanctification (1 Cor. 13). But because love always seeks the edification of the members of Christ's body, it manifests itself in a variety of ways, depending on the situation and need. At one time it shows itself in tears, at another time in rejoicing, at yet another time is admonition, but never by compromising the means by which the spiritual unity of the church comes into being.

Just as Christians are not relating to one another charitably if they compromise the truth of the gospel, so they can never relate to one another confessionally if they forfeit the love principle which seeks the edification of fellow members of the Body of Christ, no matter where they are to be found. It is never possible for truth loving Christians, for example, to "burn at the stake" fellow Christians with whom they have confessional disagreement, and to justify such an action in the name of "love for the truth." Francis Pieper writes in an essay he delivered at the 12th convention of The Lutheran Synodical-Conference of North America in 1888:

If we wish to preserve unity in faith, we dare not surrender any article of revealed doctrine. But it is also to be noted that the apostle says in Eph. 4:3, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." The unity of the Spirit can only be preserved through the bond of peace. If those who stand in unity of faith are not truly peaceable but quarrelsome, if they do not allow love to govern in everything that does not pertain to faith, then unity of faith will not long remain. Luther: "Where there is no love, doctrine cannot remain pure."¹⁵

2. Church fellowship has as its necessary basis complete agreement in doctrine and practice.

Church fellowship is one form of inter-Christian relationship between two autonomous church bodies. The Formula of Concord states that "churches are not to condemn one another because of differences in

¹⁵ Francis Pieper, "Von der Einigkeit im Glauben," in *Verhandlungen der zwölften Versammlung der Evang.-luth. Synodalkonferenz von Nord-Amerika* (St. Louis: Luth. Concordia-Verlog, 1888).

ceremonies when in Christian freedom one has fewer or more than another, as long as they are otherwise united in teaching and in all the articles of faith as well as in the proper use of the holy sacraments" (FC SD X, 31). Church fellowship means "agreement in doctrine and practice."¹⁶ But since this is true, then there can be no "levels of church fellowship," for there can be no levels of "complete agreement." Either agreement (complete) in the confession of the gospel exists or it does not exist. Where there is agreement in the confession of the gospel, it would be separatistic for church bodies not to commune together, to exchange pulpits, to lead public worship services together (i.e., to remain apart from one another). But where there is disagreement in doctrine, the basis for church fellowship as the church has defined this term throughout its existence, does not exist.¹⁷ But there most certainly are inter-church relationships

¹⁶ See "The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship," Office of the President and Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, February 2000, for a good summary statement of what Church Fellowship entails.

¹⁷ In 1969 the LCMS declared itself to be in altar and pulpit fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. But in the years following this action, it became obvious that the two churches were not in complete doctrinal agreement. The Missouri Synod sent representatives for discussion with the ALC reported to the Synod in 1981: "... the two church bodies have quite different convictions about the implications of our doctrinal differences for church fellowship. For the ALC, fellowship between Lutheran church bodies is a rather basic relationship reflecting a somewhat minimal agreement in the Gospel and the sacraments; in this view, doctrinal differences are to be tolerated both within and between Lutheran church bodies and are therefore not divisive or disruptive of altar and pulpit fellowship. However, for the LCMS (and traditionally, for other Lutheran church bodies as well) altar and pulpit fellowship between church bodies is the deepest and closest possible relationship precisely because it is based on comprehensive agreement in the Biblical and confessional doctrine of the Gospel, in all its articles, and in the right administration of the holy sacraments. In the LCMS view, doctrinal differences cannot be tolerated either within or between church bodies and are by their very nature disruptive and divisive of altar and pulpit fellowship" (*Convention Workbook*, 1981, 151). In its report *The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship*, the CTCR evaluates four models for "external unity in the church"—conciliarity (the model of the WCC), reconciled diversity (the model of the LWF), selective fellowship, and ecclesiastical declarations of altar and pulpit fellowship. After reviewing and evaluating each of these models on the basis of the Scriptural Principles of Fellowship, the Commission concludes: "Three of these models have been shown to conflict in one way or another with certain aspects of the nature of fellowship as it is presented in the Holy Scriptures. Conciliarity, reconciled diversity, and selective fellowship all violate at least some of the principles of fellowship and cannot therefore be regarded as viable models for inter-church relations at the church body level. Of those models for external unity in the church which have been examined in this report, only ecclesiastical declarations of altar and pulpit fellowship offer at least the possibility for being able to

between such Christian church bodies, and there are inter-Christian relationships between Christians belonging to church bodies not in church fellowship.

3. *Inter-Christian relationships are not a matter of "all or nothing."*

While there can be no "levels of church fellowship," the unity that binds all Christians together in the Body of Christ may be expressed in a variety of ways. The LCMS does not hold to what some refer to as "the unit concept of fellowship." Walther participated in worship and prayer with individuals not in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS. Up until 1944, the terms "prayer fellowship" and "joint fellowship" were used synonymously by the LCMS to refer to praying together with Christians not in doctrinal agreement with one another. The 1943 Catechism (Question 216), as well as the 1986 Catechism (Question 206), say with reference to the Lord's Prayer: "In Jesus all believers are children of the one Father and should pray with and for one another." Christians cannot pray with non-Christians, but believers in Jesus may pray for and with one another, even if they belong to church bodies not in church fellowship.

In holding to this position the LCMS finds itself in conformity with confessional Lutherans from the time of the Reformation. It is instructive to refer to CTCR reports regarding this point. In its 1965 report, *Theology of Fellowship*, which was formally approved by the 1967 synodical convention, the Commission states:

Those who subscribed to them [the Lutheran Confessions] were automatically in pulpit fellowship with one another. Those who did not subscribe to them, but adhered to other confessions, were, according to the Preface of the Book of Concord, not condemned as heretics . . . This followed inevitably from the doctrine of the church as it is contained in the Lutheran Confessions . . . the Book of Concord recognizes a responsibility of Lutherans toward such erring Christians . . . so-called colloquies . . . were repeatedly held by Lutheran theologians with Roman Catholic and also with Reformed theologians. At the colloquy of Regensburg in 1601 neither Lutherans nor Roman Catholics appear to have considered it improper to open the colloquy and the individual

take into account all of what the Scriptures have to say about the nature of fellowship. The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, therefore, while recognizing that this model is neither divinely ordained nor Scripturally mandated, is convinced that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod should continue to seek to carry out the Scriptural Principles of Fellowship at the church body level by means of ecclesiastical declarations of altar and pulpit fellowship based on agreement in doctrine and practice." (42)

sessions of the colloquy with prayer. Numerous passages in the official minutes of this colloquy state that all meetings were opened with liturgical prayers and that representatives of both sides changed off in conducting the opening devotions.

At the Colloquy of Thorn in 1645 where Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Reformed met, the Lutherans asked that the same procedure be followed. When the Catholics refused, and insisted that they alone conduct the opening devotions, the Lutherans refused to attend the devotions under these conditions.

From these cases it appears that the Lutherans, during the period of orthodoxy, did not refuse as a matter of principle to pray with Reformed, and even the Roman Catholics. They did refuse when they themselves were treated as heretics.¹⁸

This view of the LCMS that the *koinonia* (fellowship) which binds Christians together in the Body of Christ may be given expression also where complete agreement in confession is lacking, contrasts sharply with the position of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). One of its official documents states:

We may classify these joint expressions of faith in various ways according to the particular realm of activity in which they occur, pulpit fellowship, altar fellowship, prayer fellowship, fellowship in worship, fellowship in church work, in missions, in Christian education, in Christian charity. Yet insofar as they are joint expressions of faith, they are all essentially one and the same thing, and are all properly covered by a common designation, namely, church fellowship. Church fellowship should therefore be treated as a unit concept, covering every joint expression, manifestation, and demonstration of a common faith.¹⁹

It is for this reason that the WELS rejects joint prayers or worship of any kind with individuals who belong to church bodies not in altar and pulpit fellowship with it.²⁰ This is not now, nor has it ever been, the

¹⁸ *Theology of Fellowship*, A Report of the CTCR, 1965, 18–19. Cf. 1967 Resolution 2-13 “To Adopt ‘Theology of Fellowship’ for Reference and Guidance.”

¹⁹ *Doctrinal Statements of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, 1970, 51.

²⁰ On the basis of the unit concept understanding of fellowship, for example, WELS considers it unionistic for “a soloist who does not share our faith to lead us in worship” at a wedding service, cf. *The Northwestern Lutheran*, October 1983, 278. It is also considered unionistic for a WELS congregation to have a non-WELS member play the organ for public worship, or for a WELS member to play the organ in a congregation not in church fellowship with WELS; cf. *The Northwestern Lutheran*, April 15, 1989, 152. In response to the question as to whether it would be contrary to the WELS teaching on church fellowship to sing Handel’s *Messiah* with a community chorus, the answer is that it all depends. If the purpose of the singing is that the chorus “merely performs the

position of the LCMS, although there are examples of individuals in the LCMS who have held similar views. It was primarily a disagreement over this very issue that led the WELS to break church fellowship with the LCMS in 1961.²¹ And as an article in a recent issue of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* makes clear, this continues to be the position of the Wisconsin Synod.²²

4. The scriptural principles of fellowship must be distinguished from their application in specific inter-Christian relationship situations.

The CTCR states in its *Nature and Implications* report:

Although the Scriptures have much to say about the spiritual unity which binds all believers together in the body of Christ and with one another, and despite the exhortations of the inspired writers that the church should seek to manifest its given unity externally without endangering the means by which the unity of the church is created, God's Word does not prescribe specific procedures for carrying this out in each particular case. . . . The Scriptures, rather than presenting the church with specific regulations for each and every inter-Christian relationship, set forth fundamental principles which are to be applied to the unique situation in which Christians find themselves at any given point in history.²³

This distinction between the principles of fellowship and their application in specific situations may be illustrated in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. As the CTCR has noted, in one situation Paul circumcised

great works of choral heritage," then participation by a WELS member "is not religious unionism – the false fellowship of disparate faith." But "if some in the community chorus want to make the singing of the Messiah as expression of religious oneness," then the "confessional response must be to withdraw"; cf. *The Northwestern Lutheran*, November 15, 1990, 397.

²¹ In this connection, it is enlightening to review an open letter sent by W. M. Oesch and Manfred Roensch, professors of our LCMS sister church in Germany in 1961 to WELS President Naumann. It reads in part: . . . "It should be possible in certain situations to express one's Christian faith together with Christians from false-believing churches. . . . Our attention must be directed not toward avoiding all mutuality of faith manifestations, but toward overcoming all that compromises the *Notae Purae*. This positive approach governed Walther's actions at the Free Conferences. . . . It was the unanimous conviction of the Overseas Committee that this definition of church fellowship by placing all manifestations of a common faith on the same level actually . . . puts the Wisconsin synod in a position which is to some extent outside of the Scriptures themselves. . . ." (Letter from Professor W. M. Oesch, D.D. and Pastor Manfred Roensch, Dr. Theol., to President Oscar J. Naumann, July 28, 1961) (in CTCR files).

²² John F. Brug, "News and Comments," *Wisconsin Synod Quarterly* 105:4 (Fall 2008): 294-300.

²³ *The Nature and Implications of the Concepts of Fellowship*, 18-19.

Timothy (whose father was a Greek and mother a Jew) "because of the Jews that were in those places" (Acts 16:3), while in another situation he chose not to circumcise the Greek Titus (Gal. 2:3), so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved. The same principle that the gospel be purely preached was applied in differing ways in different circumstances, but it was the same principle. The same scripture principles apply to all inter-Christian relationships, but they must always be applied confessionally and charitably.

Christians, as they seek to be faithful to the scriptural principles of fellowship, recognize the need to guard against the danger of turning the scriptural principles into legalistic rules. Relating to other Christians charitably and confessionally must necessarily allow for pastoral flexibility in applying the scriptural principles of fellowship in different situations and contexts.

5. Responsible commitment to the covenants of love members of the Synod make with one another with respect to the application of the scriptural principles of fellowship is necessary for the building up of and the maintaining of an atmosphere necessary for relating to other Christians charitably and confessionally.

The LCMS constitution lists seven "Conditions of Membership" for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod. The second "condition" listed is the following: "Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as a) Serving congregations of mixed confession, as such, by ministers of the church; b) Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession; c) Participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities." (LCMS Constitution, Art. VI). This is a "covenant of love" which the members of the LCMS make with one another regarding the understanding of the application of the scriptural principles of fellowship as they relate to church bodies with which the Synod is not in church fellowship. And it is a "covenant of love" which the members of the Synod agree to honor and uphold, "to abide by, act, and teach in accordance with" (Bylaw 1.6.2.7). Relating to other Christians charitably and confessionally goes

hand in hand with responsible commitment to mutual decisions. It is impossible to have one without the other. A lack of responsible commitment invites the very suspicion and mistrust which inhibits responsible pastoral care. But genuine commitment to our agreed-upon

procedures builds the atmosphere of confidence and trust in which freedom for pastoral ministry thrives.²⁴

This implies, however, that it is also proper and indeed even necessary to re-examine our "covenants of love" with one another from time to time to see if such agreed-upon ways of proceeding with respect to applying the scriptural principles of fellowship are still the best and most effective ways of relating to other Christians and Christian churches in the present context. Covenants of love can and need to be revised from time to time. But they ought not be disregarded and violated unilaterally. To arbitrarily dismiss our agreed-upon ways of carrying out certain inter-Christian relationships is devoid of integrity, and is itself a loveless act and therefore contrary to the scriptural principles of fellowship.²⁵

The CTCR is at the present time nearing completion of "Guidelines for Inter-Christian Relationships." In this report it is examining a number of these "covenants of love" which the members of the Synod have made with each other by virtue of their membership in the Synod with respect to relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ in church bodies not in doctrinal agreement with the LCMS. The challenge facing us in the LCMS today is to seek together manifestations of our unity in the Body of Christ externally in ways which take into account all that the Scriptures say, lest we be found guilty of falling into either the error of separatism or the error of compromising the gospel of Jesus Christ.

III. Conclusion

The unity of the one Holy Christian Church is a reality. It is the Body of Christ, made one by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace, the Gospel and the sacraments. But external divisions in

²⁴ *The Nature and Implications of the Concepts of Fellowship*, 18-19.

²⁵ Cf. Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions* (Muhlenberg Press: Philadelphia, 1961), 256-257. Schlink states: "Obedience to the ecclesiastical authority is above all faith in the Gospel ... Disobedience to the bishop is disobedience to God. Over against this it cannot be urged that the institution of a superior church government and the delineation of its authority is by human right, that is, the outgrowth of the free arrangement of the church. For obedience to the church administration is taken out of the area of the free interests of individuals or those of the congregation, because the preaching of the bishop and the ordination and excommunications which he performs are done not by human but by divine right in the office of the Word. Moreover, we should not only obey the preaching but also the regulations which the church has adopted in the unity of faith and love for the preservation of preaching. No Christian exists by himself, but he is a member of a congregation. Also disobedience to an ordinance of the church instituted by human right is disobedience to God since it violates the law of love."

the church as it exists in this world continue to exist. Christians committed to this scriptural truth must be engaged in every effort to resolve, with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, doctrinal disagreements with fellow Christians by working toward church fellowship with those Christian churches with which it is not united in "doctrine and practice." The LCMS is such a church. Our first purpose (objective) as a Synod is:

To conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy" (LCMS Constitution, Art. III, 1).

Christians who belong to such a church body will seek ways to manifest this unity with brothers and sisters in Christ, wherever they are to be found, "Charitably and Confessionally."

Theological Observer

How Did We Come to This?

During last week's biennial Church Wide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the church affirmed major policy recommendations to allow for the blessing of same-sex unions (which practice will soon inflate to same-sex marriage) and the rostering of gay and lesbian pastors in partnered relationships. Earlier in the week it also passed by one vote—out of over a thousand total votes cast—a Social Statement on Sexuality that admitted there was no consensus on the moral evaluation of homosexual conduct, and offered no compelling biblical or theological reasons to support the policies it later in fact adopted. The Statement was firm and bold on issues that everyone agreed upon—the moral condemnation of promiscuity, pornography, sexual exploitation, etc.—but indecisive and vague about contested issues—co-habitation, premarital sex, the importance of the nuclear family, and, of course, homosexual conduct. Right before the vote on the Social Statement a totally unexpected tornado hit the Minneapolis Conference Center where we were meeting as well as the huge Central Lutheran Church next door, knocking the cross off one of its towers. Orthodox voting members saw the work of God in the tornado's cross-toppling effects and in the vote that passed with a .666 majority. Revisionists noted that the sun came out after the vote. In response the orthodox quipped that the sun comes out almost every day but rogue tornados are pretty rare!

Those in the orthodox camp warned the assembly not to vote on binding church doctrine, especially if it had no convincing biblical or theological arguments to overturn the moral consensus of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church held throughout the ages and by 99% of the world's Christians. Such action would identify the ELCA with a rapidly declining liberal Protestantism while departing from orthodox teaching and practice. Strong arguments against the Social Statement and policy recommendations were made by pastors and laypersons—bishops were for the most part silent—to no avail. The church left the Great Tradition of moral teaching to identify with the United Church of Christ and the Episcopalians.

How did this come to be? On the one hand, the fact that the largest American Lutheran church body had become the first confessional church to accept homosexual conduct was a traumatic shock to many. There was much anger and anguish. On the other hand, the decision was not at all unexpected by those of us who have fought against the underlying currents operating in the church from its very inception. The fight has been long yet predictable. Liberal Protestantism was the ELCA's destination. Indeed, its presiding Bishop, Mark Hanson, is fast becoming the charismatic leader of liberal Protestantism.

"There is nothing but the Social Gospel," shouted a voting member at the assembly. But that is certainly not Lutheran doctrine. The various programs of social change taken to heart by the church are human works in God's left-hand reign, having to do with the Law, not the Gospel. Rather, the real Gospel is clear: the grace of God in Jesus Christ is offered to repentant sinners condemned by the Law and then called to amendment of life by the Spirit. Liberating efforts in the realm of social and political change are possibly effects of the Gospel, but certainly not the Gospel itself.

But the ELCA has accepted the Social Gospel as its working theology even though its constitution has a marvelous statement of the classic Gospel. The liberating movements fueled by militant feminism, multiculturalism, anti-racism, anti-heterosexism, anti-imperialism, and now ecologism have been moved to the center while the classic Gospel and its missional imperatives have been pushed to the periphery. The policies issuing from these liberationist themes are non-negotiable in the ELCA, which is compelling evidence that they are at the center. No one can dislodge the ELCA's commitment to purge all masculine language about God from its speech and worship, to demur on the biblically normative status of the nuclear family, to refuse to put limits on abortion in its internal policies or to advocate publicly for pro-life policies, to press for left-wing public domestic and foreign policy, to replace evangelism abroad with dialog, to commit to "full inclusion" of gays and lesbians at the expense of church unity, and to buy in fully to the movement against global warming. Though it is dogmatic on these issues it is confused about something as important as the assessment of homosexual conduct. Yet, it acts anyway because of the pressure exerted by those who want to liberate church and society from heterosexism.

But how did the liberal Protestant agenda replace the Christian core? There are many reasons, a goodly number that evangelicals share with Lutherans: a culture moving quickly toward permissive morality; the self-esteem movement leading to cheap grace; lay individualism combined with apathy toward Christian teaching; an obliviousness to church tradition and to the voice of the world church; and, above all, the loss of an authentic principle of authority in the church. This last item I will address in more detail later.

The ELCA has a particular history that has compounded these problems. The mid-80s planning stage of the ELCA was dramatically affected by a group of radicals who pressed liberationist (feminist, black, multiculturalist, gay) legislative initiatives right into the center of the ELCA structures. Among them was a quota system that skews every committee, council, task force, synod assembly, and national assembly toward the "progressive" side. (There are quotas for representing specific groups in all the organized activity of the church. 60% must be lay, 50% must be women, 10% must be people of color or whose language is other than English. The losers, of course, are white male pastors; our Virginia delegation to the assembly, for example, had only one

male pastor among its eight elected members.) Further, the prescribed structure distanced the 65 Bishops from the decision-making of the church. The Bishops have only influence, not power. (Aware of their divisiveness, the Bishops voted 44-14 to require a two thirds majority for the enactment of the Sexuality Task Force's policy recommendations, but were ignored by both the Church Council and the Assembly.) Theologians were given no formal, ongoing, corporate role in setting the direction of the ELCA. They, too, were kept at a distance and actually viewed as one more competing interest group.

The radicals so decisive in the defining moments of the ELCA intended to smash the authority of the influential white male theologians and bishops who had informally kept both the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America on course. The radicals wanted many voices and perspectives, especially those of the "marginalized," put forward in the ongoing deliberations of the ELCA. They were so successful that now after twenty years there is no authoritative biblical or theological guidance in the church. There are only many voices. The 2009 Assembly legitimated those many voices by adapting a "bound-conscience" principle in which anyone claiming a sincerely-held conviction on about any doctrine must be respected. The truth of the Word of God has been reduced to sincerely-held opinion.

What was truly chilling about the Assembly's debates was that the revisionists seemed to quote Jesus and the Bible as knowledgeably and persuasively as the orthodox. Passages reinforcing their respective agendas were selected and then brilliantly woven into their arguments. Both sides seemed to have the Bible on their side. The revisionists "contextualized" and relativized the relevant texts. The orthodox claimed a plain sense reading of Scripture. The Lutheran Confessions were utilized effectively by both sides. There was no authoritative interpretation conveyed by any agent or agency in the church. The church was and is rudderless.

Sola Scriptura, a Lutheran principle adopted by evangelicals, did not seem to be sufficient in such circumstances. An authoritative tradition of interpretation of the Bible seemed to be essential. More was needed than the Word alone. Protestants seem to lack such an authoritative tradition so they fight and split. In this situation the option of swimming the Tiber seems all the more tempting

The fall-out of these historic moves by the ELCA is hard to predict, mainly because the Lutheran orthodox have no group of dissenting Bishops around whom to rally. There will be a profusion of different responses by congregations and individuals. Many congregations and individuals will leave the ELCA. Others will bide their time to see what Lutheran CORE (Lutheran Coalition for Renewal) will become as it strives to articulate and then embody the best of Lutheranism. Many will withdraw from involvement in the ELCA and its Synods and live at the local level. Many others will try to live on as if nothing happened. Others will approve of the new direction. But a

tectonic shift has taken place, and it wasn't primarily about sex. The ELCA has formally left the Great Tradition for liberal Protestantism.

Robert Benne

Director of the Roanoke College Center for Religion and Society

[Robert Benne was a voting member of the Virginia Synod at the 2009 Church Wide Assembly of the ELCA in Minneapolis on August 17-23. This response was written shortly after that assembly and has circulated online. It is reprinted here with the permission of the author. The Editors]

The Lithuanian Lutheran Church Today

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania is a small and vibrant church which traces its origins back to the mission efforts of German merchants and travelers who brought the gospel of the saving work of Christ to this region in the early days of the Reformation. The establishment of a Lutheran university at Königsberg in East Prussia in 1544 provided a staunch and bold confessional Lutheranism which continued to flourish even with opposition from the Roman Catholic majority and representatives of other Protestant churches. Even the inroads of German Pietism from Halle which quickly spread throughout this region could not completely stifle the deep Lutheran spirit. In the 19th century when the Prussian Emperor forced the church into a union with the Reformed, Minor Lithuanians continued to identify themselves as Lutheran and to catechize their children with Luther's Small Catechism. In the early decades of the 20th century when other European Lutheran Churches were falling victim to liberal German theologies, the Lithuanian clergy and people held firmly to sound theology.

Until the end of WWI, there were two Lithuanias, Major and Minor, divided between Russia and Prussia. They were reunited in 1923 and enjoyed less than two decades of freedom before WWII. During and after WWII, the Lutheran population was literally decimated. There were at least 212,000 Lutherans in Lithuania in 1940, and most—except a mere 20,000 were forced to flee during the war years. After the war, persecution and exile afflicted the church. All church properties were confiscated and most church buildings were desecrated and put to secular uses as barns, granaries, factories, sports arenas, and cinemas. Only 27 of the 86 parishes still existed when independence from the USSR came in 1990. Of 71 priests, only eight were left. In the face of constant harassment from the state, insults from Communist officials, and the loss of all church property, the pastors and people kept the faith.

The Lithuanian experience was not unique. What made the difference in Lithuania was the continued strength of the Roman Catholic Church. This provided the Lutherans with a certain degree of protection in that the state was preoccupied with the Roman Catholic Church and its dissident movements,

and therefore gave less attention to the Lutherans. The strength of the Roman Catholic Church in the nation also made it possible for Lutherans to maintain a clearer identity and avoid some of the corrosive influences of secularism.

Church and State

Since 1990 there has been a good working relationship between the Lutherans and the Lithuanian state. Even though the Lutheran church has no official concordat with the state, as does the Roman Catholic Church, it is officially recognized as a traditional faith. This allows Lutherans to teach the faith in the public schools and also provides it with a small measure of financial support from the state.

Although the Lutheran church represents only one percent of the population of Lithuania, it enjoys a measure of influence that is far out of proportion to its size. The president of the republic meets annually with the bishops of the Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox, and Lutheran churches to discuss national issues and receive their input. Because they understand the separation between the Two Kingdoms, the Lutheran church does not expect the state to act as an arm of the church, nor does the church permit itself to be made a department of the state.

The government of our church is episcopal and synodical. The synod meets tri-annually. Between sessions, its policies are carried out by the church's consistory which is headed by the bishop and includes both clergy and lay members. The church is governed by statutes enacted in 1955. In order to adjust to its new situation, the statutes about church property and related issues were modified in 1990.

The Church's Struggle to Keep the Faith

After independence efforts were made by some foreign church officials to introduce theological and ecclesiastical novelties. These were related to new views of the Bible and human rights issues such the ordination of women to the ministry. The church has successfully resisted these efforts. It has always been theologically conservative and is now moving toward a more self-consciously confessional stance.

Through the able efforts of the late Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Sr. and the Consistory, the seed of the gospel was again sown and confessional Lutheran self-consciousness has grown. Contacts with confessionally sound Lutheran churches in other lands further increased through the efforts of late Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Jr. who spoke out strongly against higher criticism and instituted a program to better educate the clergy and parishes in the confessional teachings of the Book of Concord. The church is now in fellowship with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and co-operates in the sponsorship of annual theological conferences for Eastern European church leaders. This work is now being continued under Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis.

At present, the church faces difficulties in preparing pastors for the work of the ministry. In 1992 a joint department of evangelical theology was established at Klaipėda University. Course work was provided for those who wished to study theology. Although the agreement was signed between the church and the university, the department has grown independent of the church and espouses liberal positions which are unscriptural and unacceptable to the church. The church now has no voice in its program and advice is no longer sought in faculty appointments. Now the church must face the question of how to provide sound training for those who wish to serve in the ministry. It is aware that it will have to depend upon sister churches to assist her in this important work.

The Roman Catholic Church in Lithuania is also facing a crisis in theological education. It has only three seminaries and only the Samogitian seminary in Telšiai began the new academic year with a full class of seven students. The Kaunas seminary has only six new enrollees and Vilnius has only three new students. A fourth seminary in Vilkaviškis closed because of low enrollment. Now there is talk that it may be necessary to look outside the country to find clergy to serve the church.

Present Challenges

Lithuania has experienced great political, economic, and social upheaval, but these have not affected the church's doctrine and practice. To Lithuanians a "modern church" is one with heating, indoor plumbing, microphones and loudspeakers. The synod of 2008 amended its statutes to say that the church's doctrinal position cannot be changed regardless of societal changes.

The greatest challenge facing the church is implementation of a program of evangelism. Other challenges include the further education of the clergy, lay leaders, teachers of the Lutheran faith in the public schools, and congregational leaders. On the practical level, attempts go on to regain and repair devastated property, as well as provide some measure of financial support for the clergy.

The population of Lithuania stands at 3.5 million. Of these, almost three million are ethnic Lithuanians, six percent are Russian, another six percent are Polish, and smaller percentages of Belorussians and Ukrainians. In the most recent elections, the conservative Christian Democratic Party gained the most support—around 21 percent, because of Russian incursions partially into Georgia and fears concerning what Russia may have in mind for the Baltic States. In the recent presidential election the winning candidate, Dalia Grybauskaitė received 68 percent of the vote. Such is often the case in states where elections are closely controlled, but foreign and domestic observers alike declared that this was an open and free election. The new president is considered conservative in her political views. In fact, when she announced

her candidacy the conservatives declared that they would not nominate a candidate to stand against her.

84 percent of the Lithuanian population publicly declare themselves to be adherents of religious faiths. 10 percent state that they have no church to which they adhere and 8 percent declined to answer. In rural areas 90 percent of the population declare themselves to be religious as compared to 80 percent in the cities. Although it is small, the Lutheran church is the fourth largest religious group in the country. Over 2,700,000 identify themselves as Roman Catholics. Second and third place are taken by Russian Orthodox and Russian Old Believers whose churches grew rapidly with Russian immigration during the Communist years. They number about 170,000.

Statistics only imperfectly describe the religious situation. The younger generation, although baptized and confirmed, is not closely tied to the churches, and many are adopting a secularist world view. Few would say that they are anti-church, but the church does not affect their thinking and behavior.

The divorce rate in the country is a little less than 50 percent—an improvement over past years. Unfortunately the abortion rate is high, almost 48 percent in 2006 according to the government. The Roman Catholic Church claims that these statistics are too low.

Virtually all funerals in Lithuania are conducted by clergy. To be buried by a public speaker as in secular states is simply out of the question. The suicide rate, formerly the highest in the world, is now beginning to decrease, but it is still the highest in Europe.

European Membership

Lithuania, together with its Baltic neighbors and Poland, are now full members of the European Union. At first some Lithuanians were afraid that this would bring a rapid increase in the costs of goods. This fear has proved to be largely unfounded. The vast majority of Lithuanians are self-consciously Lithuanian but happy to be more closely associated with larger western European and Scandinavian neighbors. There has been no mass exodus of laborers to the West, but university graduates regularly move to more prosperous nations.

The European Union has brought the country financial benefits, including money to update roads and public utilities, and related infrastructure items which deteriorated during the Soviet years.

Lithuanian society is now largely secularized but this was not the result of internal factors or problems within the churches. Many Lithuanians do not know the Gospel. The churches are generally thought to be simply part of the landscape. During the Soviet years the children of devout and faithful parents were subject to many pressures to embrace secularism. They need to be re-won

and the large numbers of people who simply have no church background at all need to hear the Gospel message and its invitation and be integrated into the life of the church through baptism and catechesis.

The Effects of Recession

The devastating economic collapse in the 1990s had little effect on the church. The people were used to having little. At that time, baptisms and other pastoral acts skyrocketed. This dramatic reaction was not expected during this recession, because formerly the return to the churches was a sign of the repudiation of Communism. The Lithuanian Lutheran church has never had much money. It has no structures that need to be financed; the bishop and consistory share a single secretary, who is the church's only employee. The bishop receives a small stipend. There is no talk of cutting staff or services because there is no fat to cut. There is no concern to cut off the heat in the churches for most of them have only a wood stove that is stoked only on Sunday morning, if at all. When meeting with Western Europeans, Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis points out that the unheated churches are the Lithuanian contribution to the war against global warming. People continue to support their pastors as in the past, mostly by giving gifts at baptisms, funerals, weddings, and memorials. This will remain unchanged. If the national currency should have to be devalued, the pastors will face the same difficulties as their parishioners and the general population. This situation, however, is one that all had to face after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The church faces major challenges in evangelism and education. God's law and gospel must be brought to the secularized and some times alienated people and programs must be developed both for parish education in general and those who are preparing for ordination.

Statistics of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania

Total number of Lutherans: 19,637

Parishes: 54

Total number of communicants: 10,000

Mean parish membership: 50-200

Average Sunday attendance: 25/30 %

Bishop: 1

Pastors: 20

Deacons: 1

Average pastoral allowance per month: 100-200 Euros (about \$150-300)

Church buildings: 44

Prayer houses: 7

Public schools offering courses in Lutheran Christianity: 22

Number of teachers: 27

Sunday schools: 18

Deaconal centers: 6

Orphan homes: 1
 Kindergartens: 1
 Rented facilities for worship: 4
 Organists: 34
 Choir masters: 24
 Parish choirs: 30

Darius Petkunas
 Klaipeda, Lithuania

365 Days with Calvin

365 days with Calvin, edited by Joel R. Bleeke (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2008), appeared without request at the seminary bookstore. It was probably produced to commemorate the 500th anniversary of his birth in 2009. Any assumption that Luther and Calvin were joined at the Reformation hip and differed only in inconsequential sacramental details that would concern only theologians and not pew sitting church goers is immediately dissipated by any of the 365 devotions. Since the devotions follow no liturgical or theological order, I randomly went to 21 June, "Praying for Pardon in Disease," based on Jesus' forgiving the sins of the paralytic man and healing him. Consider its second sentence. "Since Christ intends to bestow health of body, he begins by removing the man's sin, the cause of his disease, reminding the paralytic of the origin of his disease and of the way he ought to pray." Wow! For starters the account contains no mention of the man's praying or that his sin caused his disease. Like the blind man in John, he may have been born with paralysis and had no chance to commit an honest to goodness sin for which he would have been, as Calvin puts it, chastised.

This devotion's last sentence says it all: "So when afflictions remind us of our sins, let us first be careful to pray for pardon, so when God is reconciled to us, he may withdraw from punishing us." Wow! Does he mean that God was not reconciled before we sinned? Editor Bleeke adds a "For Meditation" at the bottom of the page claiming that "geo-political, medical and natural crises that [are] crying out for justice and healing. All are merely symptomatic of the unforgiven sin." Those suffering "from cancer, heart disease or Type 1 diabetes" are encouraged to ask God for forgiveness. (Perhaps even those of us with less than perfect 120/80 blood pressure also should.) This list of diseases covers the waterfront of how death will finally get hold of each of us. Senior citizens have multiple evidences of "unforgiven sin." We all knew that Calvin did not include unbelievers (the un-predestinated) in the atonement, but he goes further in seeing believers' misfortunes as evidence of God's wrath. Calvin's doctrine of "God's chastisements" is downright wrong. Since Genesis 3, misfortunes—the general and universal misery or whatever you want to call it—simply belong to the human condition. Misery of every kind comes with the turf of being human. Out of pity for us God sentenced the

world to the same kind of corruption we face, so that our bodies destined to the corruption of the grave would not have to live in a pristine, perfect world.

Maladies, what Calvin calls chastisements, are not distributed in proportion to a person's sins, contra Calvin. One of the problems in the Psalms is that God's righteous saints begrudge the good fortune of evil persons. For Calvin and perhaps sadly for some Lutherans, physical health and acquisition of property and wealth are signs of God's favor. This does not square with the words of Jesus "Blessed are the poor in spirit" or Luke's briefer "Blessed are the poor." Calvin's chastisement doctrine is also silly, because all of us, believer and unbeliever, begin to experience physical deterioration as soon as we are born—or is it before we are born? Besides nothing that we own including our bodies is immune from rust and moth or theft or, in terms of recent events, lost jobs, and lower stock market prices. Eventually moth and rust have the last word. The worst thing in Calvin's chastisement theology is that it leaves those Christians whose lives are a string of one tragedy after another faced with sins, maybe sins unknown to them, which they may falsely believe that God has not forgiven. This is a really bad situation that can lead to despair and unbelief. The Old Testament book of Job wrestles with the theodicy question of why God permits evil in our lives. It takes us no further than that God is in charge and in practical terms leaves questions about our particular misfortunes unanswered. In providing a reason for our misery, Luther went no further than the *deus absconditus*. We can look at what he does, but we are not shown the divine blueprints.

Paging through the 365 devotions, words such as "Christ" and "Jesus" appear in no more than half of them. This estimate might be overly generous. For example in the one for April 18, "Our Caring Shepherd," Jesus is not mentioned. I would rather be in the arms of Luther's Jesus than Calvin's non-christological God. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Calvin's God is different than Luther's. I'll stick with Luther's devotions in *Day by Day We Magnify Thee*, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1950).

David P. Scaer

Errata

The author of the Research Note entitled "A Response to Jeffrey Kloha's Study of the Trans-Congregational Church" in *CTQ* 73:3 (July 2009): 270-275 is John G. Nordling. His name was inadvertently omitted from the middle of page 275. The Editors

Book Reviews

***The Blessings of Weekly Communion.* By Kenneth W. Wieting. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006. 304 pages. Paperback. \$24.99.**

Concordia Theological Seminary has a well-deserved reputation for a Doctor of Ministry program that combines theological rigor with focused pastoral application. This book shows why. Kenneth Wieting received the D.Min. from CTS in 2003; his project dissertation was published three years later.

Early in his ministry, Pastor Wieting was conducting pastoral visits in the homes of his parishioners when one of the young husbands in his congregation surprised him with this question: “Pastor, if the Lord’s Supper is everything that Scripture and the catechism say it is, why don’t we have the opportunity to receive it when we come for worship each week?” (9) Convinced it wouldn’t take him long to research the reason for the congregation’s practice (then twice a month), Pastor Wieting’s journey of discovery was both lengthy and revolutionary; it led to the recovery of weekly communion in that congregation and in the one he presently serves. In this book, he invites other pastors and congregations on the same journey of discovery.

Beginning with a comprehensive foundational chapter on the Scriptural and confessional parameters of the Lord’s Supper, Wieting devotes over one hundred pages of his book to an enlightening excursion through the broad sweep of the church’s views on the Sacrament of the Altar and its practice from the early church through the modern period. In our time—which is decidedly a-historical—it is especially important to come to grips with the larger setting of church practices throughout the centuries and their influence on our own practice. Wieting provides an excellent overview. Yet those who habitually look to the past for direction would do well to note his summary observation: “The Lord’s Supper has never enjoyed a golden age wherein its presence and practice were without opposition and perfectly understood and received” (52).

Obviously, our own age is no exception; each succeeding generation in the church must assume its own responsibility for fidelity in both doctrine and practice. In chapter six of his book, Pastor Wieting turns the spotlight on The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Presenting indisputable evidence from his doctoral research, he provides an interesting snapshot of current practice among LCMS congregations. 2,494 pastors serving in parish settings responded to his 1999 survey, a remarkable return rate of 48 percent and a statistically valid portrait of sacramental practice among us (156). Pastors who responded reported that 36 percent of Missouri Synod congregations offer Holy Communion at least once a Sunday (19.8% in each Sunday service and 16.2% in rotating services every week). On the face of it, the plain evidence is that LCMS congregations are gravitating toward more frequent communion.

Yet Wieting's argument is that there must be more to sacramental practice than the mere ebb and flow of historical trends. Taking up the major concerns that pastors report are impeding communion frequency, he addresses them each in sequence: increased frequency will trivialize the Sacrament, it will take too much time within the service, it is viewed as an anomaly in Lutheran practice, etc. Furthermore, he addresses forthrightly the impact of anti-Roman Catholic and pro-Protestant sentiments on Lutheran identity and practice in America (167-180).

Chapter seven, which Wieting titles "The Treasures Abound," takes up the unspeakable gifts which Christ offers worthy communicants in His Supper. Chapter eight, "These Things Matter," explores various genuinely pastoral concerns regarding the faithful administration of the Holy Supper. Patiently and lovingly, yet straightforwardly, Pastor Wieting addresses matters which have unfortunately become contentious among us: the theology and practice of the liturgy, the nature, content, and style of preaching, faithful preparation for communion, closed communion (which Wieting reminds us is a *loving* practice [249]), and the proper distribution and disposal of the elements. Thoughtful pastors and laity will find rich fare here for both contemplation and implementation.

Finally, in a chapter entitled "Into the Future," Wieting invites the reader to face some of the forthright challenges to the church's identity and mission in our time. Our culture—with its morbid obsession with death, sexual promiscuity, denigration of marriage, open embrace of tolerance, inclusiveness, and pragmatism—has a corrosive effect on the church as she seeks to maintain her identity as God's own creation: very much in the world, and yet conscientiously not of it. In his patient style, Wieting urges pastors and laity alike to see the central role of the Sacrament of the Altar in maintaining the church's life and mission of our time in the face of such destructive influences. "The heart and center of this book," he writes, "is the loving encouragement that God's people not be denied the opportunity to receive the main service when they come for regular weekly worship . . . their need for the heavenly food of (Christ's) body and blood is no less than the need of their brothers and sisters after Pentecost and in the early church and in the church of the Reformation" (269).

This pastoral focus is underscored by the very helpful discussion questions Wieting has included at the close of each chapter. Thus the reader is invited to ponder and review the line of argumentation as he or she is exposed to concepts that, while native to Lutheran theology, may unfortunately seem foreign at first reading. The book could well serve as a lengthy study on the Sacrament and its use for a church council or board of elders.

In his preface to the Small Catechism, Dr. Martin Luther warns pastors against compelling people to more frequent communion: "Our preaching should instead be such that of their own accord and without our command,

people feel constrained themselves and press us pastors to serve the Sacrament." (*Luther's Small Catechism*, CPH, 1986, 250) The honest question of one of his parishioners led Kenneth Wieting to do just that; in this very helpful book he in turn invites other faithful pastors to consider the same. And we are all the richer for it.

Harold L. Senkbeil

Director of Doxology: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel
Brookfield, WI

Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin. By Randall C. Zachman. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007. 548 pages. Hardcover, \$55.00. Paperback, \$40.00.

The traditional Reformed or Presbyterian view of worship, governed by what is sometimes called the "regulative principle," says that God requires "that we in nowise make any image of God, nor worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his Word" (Heidelberg Catechism, q. 96; cf. Westminster Confession of Faith 21.1; Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* 3:343, 646). Classic Calvinist worship is an auditory experience, not a visual one.

However, Randall Zachman, associate professor of Reformation studies at the University of Notre Dame, contends that this way of approaching worship (and religion in general) is not faithful to the theology of John Calvin. After an important introductory chapter, in which Zachman interacts with Calvin scholarship, the other chapters consist of diachronic presentations of Calvin's thought on the following issues: the universe as a living image of God, the image of God in humankind, providence, God's self-revelation in Scripture to Israel and the Church, the sacraments, ceremonies, interpersonal communication, and signs of one's predestination to salvation.

Zachman's four objectives are, first, to show that for Calvin, God reveals Himself not only through the Word but also through creation, not just through proclamation, but also through manifestation. (This move, being explicitly against Barth and Bultmann, is motivated by ecological concerns.) Second, he aims to foster theological aesthetics and liturgical renewal among Reformed and Presbyterian congregations. Third, he aims to encourage gestures as vehicles of liturgical communication. Fourth, and most important, he aims to portray Calvin's theology as ecumenically open toward the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox traditions.

The diachronic arrangement of the chapters resolves many of the cognitive dissonances in Calvin's statements as they change over time. However, other contradictions in Calvin's thought remain, most especially, according to Zachman, on the issue of God's invisibility and visibility (through "living images"), and on the issue of the sacraments. Zachman explains these as an intentional dialectic on Calvin's part.

Lutheran readers may find this book to be a helpful introduction to various themes in Calvin's thought with a few unexpected turns along the way—such as that Calvin taught the imposition of hands in ordination to be a sacrament and to bestow the Holy Spirit (315–18). Zachman's work will undoubtedly be important for evangelicals and Calvinists who seek to remain faithful to Calvin's theology and yet also move in ecumenical and liturgical directions.

Benjamin T. G. Mayes
Concordia Publishing House
St. Louis, MO

Infant Baptism in Reformation Geneva: The Shaping of a Community: 1536–1574. By Karen E. Spierling. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. 253 pages. Paperback. \$39.95.

This valuable book reveals the Reformed tradition's understanding of community, church, and baptism. Spierling's sources are the minutes of the consistory of Geneva. In the ideal Reformed world the consistory functions as the civil authority that reviews and serves to enforce the ministers' decisions. Discipline as a mark of the church became explicit in Scottish Presbyterianism, but it was a fact of community life in Geneva—and there was no better way to enforce it than baptism.

The prime actor in this narrative is John Calvin, who is shown to have presented one case after another to the consistory to determine the rightness of his accusations. A favorable ruling resulted in a jail sentence, a fine, or both. The book is a narrative of case law and the reader is kept wondering what infraction the true believers might have committed and, if found guilty, what sentence will be imposed.

Calvin believed in original sin, but birth into the covenant through family eliminated any need for baptizing infants. In any event, baptism did not grant the forgiveness of sins. Eliminating two reasons offered by Catholics and Lutherans for baptizing, Calvin maintained infant baptism as a means of placing them into the community and giving the parents an opportunity to pledge to provide the child with a religious education. God had commanded baptism to keep the community intact. Emergency baptism by a midwife of a child in danger of death was strictly outlawed. Infant baptism in Geneva had to be administered in the regular worship service after the sermon to keep the word and sacrament order unbroken. Church authorities resisted the requests of some parents to have their children baptized at the beginning of service—parents who, especially in the winter, feared that the infants would die before the conclusion of the sermon. (Remember that baptism had no immediate salutary effect on the child.)

Because infant baptism involved the parents pledging to bring up the child as a Christian, a problem arose when the fathers of illegitimate children

refused to identify themselves in fear of reprisal by the consistory. Then there were those parents who had not purged themselves of Catholic ideas and went in search of a priest for a proper baptism. The poor people could not rid themselves of the medieval idea that baptism actually did something for the child right then and there. Calvin often served as a baptismal sponsor, though he saw no biblical warrant for the practice. In one instance he prevented a widow, for whose child he served as a sponsor, from leaving Geneva. His reasoning: he would not be able to bring the child up in the Reformed faith. Finally the matter was resolved by letting the mother move to a territory controlled by the Reformed.

Spierling's study of Geneva should dispel any ideas that the Reformed and Lutherans are two different branches from the same trunk. Calvin's reformation as a regulation of society through baptism reflects his own peculiar understanding of the third use of the law. Just for the record the Reformed—and that includes Presbyterians—do not believe or practice emergency baptism on infants in danger of death. The practice of parents and sponsors pledging themselves to care spiritually for the baptized child has its origins in Calvin's theology, not Luther's. For Luther, baptism is a unilateral act of God on the one being baptized. For the Reformed, baptism is the ritual of entrance into the community.

The uninteresting title of the book is in direct contradiction to its fascinating contents. This book is a great read and provides another good reason to stay Lutheran.

David P. Scaer

***This is My Body: The Presence of Christ in Reformation Thought.* By Thomas J. Davis. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. 203 pages. \$25.00.**

This book on the subject of the presence of Christ in the thought of Luther and Calvin is a collection of scholarly essays, in part previously published. The first two essays are, respectively, a study on the sacrament in early Luther and an argument for the identification of Luther's emphasis in the 1520s on the power of the word to be effective rather than on the ubiquity of Christ's body. In this second essay, Davis proposes a "hierarchy of meaning" in Luther's theology, whereby it is not the nature of the presence that is at stake, but the acceptance or denial of God's word.

There follow several articles on subjects related to Calvin's understanding of the presence of Christ in the church. Davis argues in chapter three that the Eucharist assures the Christian with the knowledge of his communion with the body of Christ. In chapter four he continues this idea, which is rooted in the Calvinist presupposition that God must "accommodate" himself to men. There, he delineates the string of instruments by which God's presence is conveyed to men: the human nature of Christ, which, being in heaven, is in

turn conveyed through the instruments at the church's disposal. These instruments are the Eucharist and preaching, the latter being the subject of the next two essays. The first contends that Calvin advocated a "bodily" preaching, since the task was to convey Christ's presence; the second presents preaching explicitly as God's accommodation to human understanding. Chapter seven neatly clarifies the reason for the Calvinist necessity of the soul ascending to heaven to feed on the body of Christ: the location of the body is essential, not accidental, so that if Christ's body were in heaven and also on earth, it would no longer be fully human, which it must be as the instrument of salvation. In chapter eight, Davis points to Augustine as the source of the increased emphasis on efficacy in later editions of Calvin's *Institutes*.

Chapter nine places Zwingli, Calvin, and Luther, in that order, on a spectrum with regards to Christ's presence. Chapter ten argues on the basis of increasingly literal understandings of language that Calvin and his followers (Theodore Beza in particular) have been dealt with too harshly. These concluding essays seem to betray the book's intent. To this reviewer, Davis appears to be trying to cast Calvin in a softer light. He does this first, by drawing him closer to Luther, though at the expense of a centered understanding of Luther's primary emphasis on the forgiveness of sins; second, by offering a clear, and indeed helpful, exploration of Calvin's understanding of divine accommodation for man's salvation; and finally, by explicitly identifying where Calvin has been misrepresented. With that in mind, Davis's book is certainly not the final word on the real presence in reformation thought, but has value in its clear presentation of Calvin and a Calvinist's interpretation of Luther on the subject.

Jacob Corzine
Th.D. Candidate
University of Berlin

Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament. Edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. Hard Cover. Xxviii + 1239 pages. \$54.99.

Every Sunday in preaching and in Bible class pastors face New Testament texts that are literally cluttered with Old Testament quotations. Most of us have neither the time nor the inclination to go back to the older revelation to see what was on the mind of the New Testament writer in using this or that Old Testament reference. This has now been done for us in twenty-four essays by eighteen contributors under the editorial guidance of G. K. Beale (Wheaton College) and D. A. Carson (formerly of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School).

Expositions of the four gospels contain sections on the New Testament and New Testament context, use of the Old Testament passages in Jewish sources, and finally textual background, the hermeneutic employed and

theological use. Craig L. Blomberg, author of the Matthew chapter, provides an introductory section to the genealogy and then comments on each of Jesus' progenitors. Similarly, the section on Matthew 1:18-25 begins with a brief introductory commentary followed by exposition on how the evangelist made use of Isaiah 7. The well respected and widely known I. Howard Marshall provides a section by section—and sometimes verse by verse—commentary in his eighty-three page essay on Acts. He begins with a lengthy introduction which includes such topics as Luke's perspective, sources and methods, his canon, and Jewish models of sermons and exegetical methods, among other topics.

Just as the title indicates, this is a biblical commentary limiting itself to how the writers of New Testament books used the Old Testament, but it goes far beyond identifying citations. The contributors probe the minds of the New Testament authors to determine why they chose certain Old Testament passages, what they saw in them, and how they were used. Old Testament citations in the New Testament are cross referenced in extra-biblical sources. A bibliography is provided at the end of each essay along with a comprehensive one at the end of the book with a seventy-page five columned biblical indices (1163-1239). Pages with the essays are divided into two columns. At first this commentary might find a place alongside of traditionally organized ones. It might soon take first place.

David P. Scaer

***The Certainty of the Faith: Apologetics in an Uncertain World.* By Richard B. Ramsay. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007. 280 pages. Paperback. \$13.99.**

Recently there have been a number of books published in the field of Christian apologetics, each with its own approach to and understanding of this oft-ignored theological discipline. *The Certainty of the Faith* is no exception. Its author, Richard B. Ramsay, a veteran missionary from the Reformed tradition, sees apologetics as an essential component of evangelism. His book was thus written to aid in engendering "an apologetic mind-set" among Christians engaged in evangelistic outreach.

Ramsay pursues this task in three distinct phases. First, he briefly introduces his readers to various schools of philosophy to show how—when pushed to their logical conclusion—they all lead to theological skepticism and moral relativism. The chief task of apologetics, then, is to demonstrate the logical incoherence and practical inconsistencies of non-Christian worldviews. This is integral to apologetics, argues Ramsay, for it removes obstacles that fetter the hearing and reception of the gospel. But the next step is not the building of a positive case for the Christian faith, as one might expect to be advanced in an apologetics text. Instead, Ramsay argues, it should be a cogent

explanation of the gospel coherently articulated against the background of the Christian worldview.

This methodology is known, at least to apologetic enthusiasts, as presuppositionalism. Ramsay clearly favors such a method, for in the second part of the book, where he briefly treats historical and contemporary apologists, he gives considerable attention to its chief advocates (e.g. Cornelius Van Til and John Frame). He does acknowledge the occasional utility of inductive *a posteriori* approaches proffered by evidentialists. Like most presuppositionalists, however, he is quick to criticize their willingness even to admit that epistemic common ground exists between Christians and nonbelievers.

The last part of the book is the most practical and useful. It considers various challenges a non-Christian may pose in the context of evangelism and briefly treats them using the memorable acronym DEFEND: Demonstrate interest in the person advancing the challenge; Explain your faith; Furnish answers to the objection; Expose the presuppositions from which the non-Christian's objections are derived; Navigate the inconsistencies of the non-Christian's worldview; and Direct the non-Christian to Christ.

Not bad advice. Overall, the book lacks sufficient depth, and seems to take non-Christian positions too lightly. Moreover, while it criticizes other approaches to apologetics, Ramsay fails to adequately address some of the major criticisms of presuppositionalism, such as the inherently circular nature of its logic. (On this, see especially John Warwick Montgomery, "Once upon an A Priori" in *Faith Founded on Fact*, 107-128.)

All things considered, though, *The Certainty of the Faith* could be a useful introduction to the field for those with no experience in apologetics. With the discussion questions at the end of each chapter, it could prove especially beneficial for small group study. However, one will definitely want to supplement it with some of the more rigorous factual-historical defenses of the faith.

Adam S. Francisco

Indices to Volume 73 (2009)

Articles, Research Notes (RN), and Theological Observers (TO)

Beckwith, Carl L. "Martin Chemnitz's Reading of the Fathers in <i>Oratio de Lectione Patrum</i> "	3:231-256
Beinert, Richard A. "Another Look at Luther's Battle with Karlstadt" ..	2:155-170
Bender, Peter C. "Kenneth F. Korby – A Teacher of Pastors" (TO)	2:171-173
Benne, Robert. "How Did We Come To This?" (TO)	4:364-367
Francisco, Adam S. "Expelled" (TO)	1:81-82
Gieschen, Charles A. "The Death of a Christian: Membership Loss or Transfer?" (TO)	1:82
Gieschen, Charles A. "Why Was Jesus with the Wild Beasts (Mark 1:13)?" (RN)	1:77-80
Gregory, Peter F. "Its End is Destruction: Babylon the Great in the Book of Revelation"	2:137-153
Grobien, Gifford. "A Lutheran Understanding of Natural Law in the Three Estates"	3:211-229
Hummel, Horace D. "Vertical Typology and Christian Worship"	1:41-59
Kleinig, John W. "Maintaining the Lifeline of the Church: Pastoral Education for the Ministry of Spirit with the Word"	1:3-15
Lammert, Richard A. "The Word of YHWH as Theophany"	3:195-210
Ludwig, Alan. "The Liturgical Shape of the Old Testament Gospel"	2:115-135
Nafzger, Samuel H. "Relating to Other Christians Charitably and Confessionally"	4:347-363
Nordling, John C. "A Response to Jeffrey Kloha's Study of the Trans-Congregational Church" (RN)	3:270-275
Petkunas, Darius. "The <i>Consensus of Sandomierz</i> : An Early Attempt to Create a Unified Protestant Church in 16 th Century Poland and Lithuania"	4:317-346
Petkunas, Darius. "The Lithuanian Lutheran Church Today (TO)	4:367-372
Pless, John T. "Löhe Studies Today" (TO)	2:182-186
Pless, John T. "The Contribution of Kenneth Korby to a Renewed Reception of Wilhelm Löhe's Pastoral Theology"	2:99-113

Scaer, David P. "365 Days with Calvin" (TO).....	4:372-373
Scaer, David P. "Richard John Neuhaus (1936-2009)" (TO).....	2:174-177
Scaer, David P. "Was Junias a Female Apostle? Maybe Not" (RN).....	1:76
Schulz, Klaus Detlev. "Two Kinds of Righteousness and Moral Philosophy: <i>Confessio Augustana</i> XVIII, Philipp Melanchthon, and Martin Luther"	1:17-40
Slenczka, Reinhard. "Agreement and Disagreement about Justification: Ten Years after the <i>Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification</i> "	4:291-316
Weinrich, William C. "At the Edge of Subscription: The <i>Abusus</i> Doctrine of the Formula of Concord – <i>Doctrina</i> or <i>Ratio</i> ?"	3:257-269
Weinrich, William C. "The Doctrine of Christ in Theological Education" (TO)	2:179-182
Weinrich, William C. "Work and Reality in Latvia" (TO)	2:177-179
Zimmerman, Paul A. "Darwin at 200 and the Challenge of Intelligent Design"	1:61-75

Book Reviews

Balswick, Jack O. and Judith K. <i>A Model for Marriage: Covenant, Grace, Empowerment and Intimacy.</i> (Gary W. Zieroth)	3:279-280
Bauckham, Richard. <i>Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony.</i> (David P. Scaer)	1:83-88
Bayer, Oswald. <i>Freedom in Response – Lutheran Ethics: Sources and Controversies.</i> (John T. Pless)	3:276-277
Beale, G. K., and D. A. Carson, editors. <i>Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament.</i> (David P. Scaer).....	4:379-380
Brown, Raymond E. <i>Christ in the Gospels of the Liturgical Year.</i> (David P. Scaer)	3:282-283
Byrne, Brendan. <i>A Costly Freedom: A Theological Reading of Mark's Gospel.</i> (Peter J. Scaer)	3:281-282
Collins, Raymond F. <i>The Power of Images in Paul.</i> (Peter J. Scaer)	3:283-284
Dandelion, Pink. <i>An Introduction to Quakerism.</i> (Stephen R. Manz)	2:189-190
Davis, Thomas J. <i>This is My Body: The Presence of Christ in Reformation Thought.</i> (Jacob Corzine)	4:378-379

- Demacopoulos, George E. *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church*. (Paul Gregory Alms).....2:190-191
- Leonard, Richard. *Preaching to the Converted: On Sundays and Feast Days Throughout the Year*. (Edward O. Grimenstein)1:93-94
- Montaque, George T. *Understanding the Bible: A Basic Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. (Peter J. Scaer).....1:88-90
- Moser, Paul K., editor. *Jesus and Philosophy: New Essays*. (Adam S. Francisco)3:284-285
- Mulligan, M., D. Turner-Sharazz, D. Wilhelm, and R. Allen, *Believing in Preaching: What Listeners Hear in Sermons*. (Edward O. Grimenstein)3:286
- Oh, Irene. *The Rights of God: Islam, Human Rights, and Comparative Ethics*. (Adam S. Francisco)1:90-91
- Ramsay, Richard B. *The Certainty of the Faith: Apologetics in an Uncertain World*. (Adam S. Francisco)4:380-381
- Scaer, David P. *Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace*. (Mark C. Mattes) ..1:91-93
- Spierling, Karen E. *Infant Baptism in Reformation Geneva: The Shaping of Community*. (David P. Scaer).....4:377-378
- Wells, David F. *The Courage to be Protestant: Truth-lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Postmodern World*. (John T. Pless).....3:277-278
- Wengert, Timothy J. *A Formula for Parish Practice: Using the Formula of Concord in Congregations*. (John T. Pless).....2:187-188
- Wieting, Kenneth W. *The Blessings of Weekly Communion*. (Harold L. Senkbeil)4:374-376
- Zachman, Randall C. *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin*. (Benjamin T. G. Mayes)4:376-377